

REPORT NUMBER 105

**OCEAN STATE OUTDOORS:
RHODE ISLAND'S COMPREHENSIVE OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN**



STATE GUIDE PLAN ELEMENT 152

2003

Prepared by the

**DIVISION OF PLANNING
RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION
and the
RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT**

Abstract

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ABSTRACT: This document represents the seventh edition of Rhode Island's plan for outdoor recreation, conservation and open space. It assesses the status of outdoor recreation issues and problems, and identifies public and private sector actions to advance the public's opportunities for accessing and enjoying the state's natural legacy of land and water.

The plan establishes a policy framework for a short and long term plan, and includes a five-year Action Agenda of specific capital and non-capital proposals.

Developed in concert with special advisory committees appointed by the State Planning Council and the Department of Environmental Management, the plan was approved by the State Planning Council as an element of the State Guide Plan and by the National Park Service, as the State of Rhode Island's State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan for the 2003-2008 period.

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152-1 INTRODUCTION

1-1 Purpose

Ocean State Outdoors is Rhode Island's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) for improving the outdoor recreation system and protecting the natural and cultural resources on which that system depends. This seventh edition of the plan reaffirms our goals, assesses the present situation, and establishes the objectives and the



implementation strategies for outdoor recreation for the next five years *Ocean State Outdoors* serves several key purposes:

State Guide Plan. As an element of the Rhode Island State Guide Plan, the SCORP has legislated stature that requires publicly supported recreation plans and projects to be consistent with this element of the State Guide Plan.

State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). This plan meets the National Park Service's planning requirement for eligibility for the federal Land and Water Conservation Funding.

State Trails Recreational Plan. This plan, in concert with *The Greenways Plan*, addresses the requirements for the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration's Recreational Trails Program which provides funds to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities.

Wetlands Priority Plan. This plan provides the wetlands priority plan required by the National Park Service for the next five years.

1-2 The Rhode Island Planning Framework

Providing for the public's enjoyment of Rhode Island's outdoor environment is an important responsibility of state government. In the decades since the first SCORP in 1965, the interest and commitment of Rhode Islanders for outdoor recreation, conservation and open space protection has grown. Planning efforts have become more multi-faceted and better connected and have been strengthened by the groundswell of the movements for environmental

protection, historic preservation, public participation, growth management and quality of life.

Rhode Island is blessed with many special natural settings, historic districts and sites, and unique local areas. This plan re-affirms the over-arching themes in the



Recreation System

1992 SCORP to protect and manage these natural and cultural resources and the recreation system they support as an integrated entity:

1. *Protecting Open Space and Critical Resources*
2. *Delivering Recreation and Resource Conservation Services*
3. *Stewardship and Partnership ...Taking Care of our Outdoor*

Rhode Island's framework that coordinates state agency and municipal activities in support of major goals and policies is outlined below. This comprehensive and integrated planning and implementation system is more urgent as Rhode Island faces ever-increasing development pressures.

The *RI Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act (1989)* requires new and stronger connections and consistency between state and local plans. All Rhode Island municipalities have locally-approved Comprehensive Community Plans that must be updated regularly. Over the past decade, the community plans have been formally incorporated into much of Rhode Island's planning, policy and practice. Plan approval status and consistency with the *State Guide Plan* are often criteria for state approvals and grant funding.

Ocean State Outdoors, articulates state recreation and conservation goals and policies, and maps out a five year action agenda for the Department of Environmental Management, other state agencies, municipalities and not-for-profit groups. It establishes the state policies and implementation program with which the community comprehensive plans must be consistent.

Other elements of the State Guide Plan support this plan, in particular *A Greener Path ... Greenspace and Greenways for Rhode Island's Future* and *The Urban and Community Forest Plan*. State guide plan elements for land use, transportation, economic development, water supply and others also contain important related guidance.

152-2 THE RHODE ISLAND OUTDOOR RECREATION SYSTEM

This chapter describes the geographic characteristics of the state, population changes and the existing recreation system.

2-1 The Physical and Socio-Economic Setting

Any consideration of a state's recreation system must begin with its distinctive physical and socio-economic qualities that both encourage and inhibit its development.

The smallest state in the Union, Rhode Island is located in southern New England just west of Cape Cod and covers a twelve-hundred-square-mile area which extends forty-eight miles north to south and thirty-seven miles to east to west. Narragansett Bay is the state's chief geographic feature, extending twenty-eight miles into the interior of Rhode Island from the Atlantic Ocean. The bay and Rhode Island's streams, rivers, and ponds occupy about twenty-five percent of the state's total area.

Despite its small size, Rhode Island has a remarkably varied topography that has helped shape land use patterns over nearly four centuries of European settlement. Early maritime settlements (Newport, Providence, Bristol, Warwick) exploited



easy access to the bay and the ocean. In the nineteenth century entrepreneurs built water-powered mills and industrial villages which grew into larger manufacturing centers along the rapidly falling inland waterways that empty into Narragansett Bay and Rhode Island Sound.

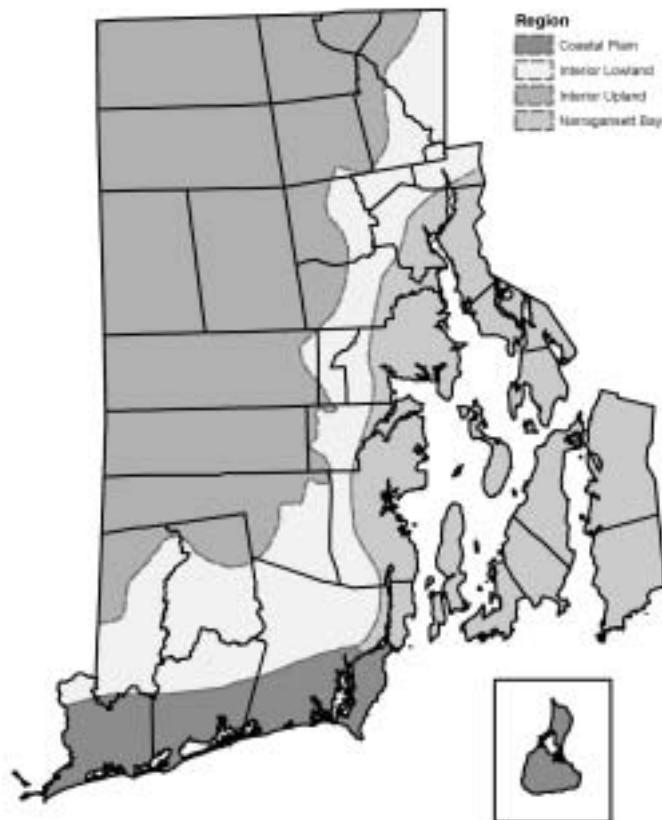
The spectacular views and healthful air of along the 440 miles of shoreline bordering Narragansett Bay and the Atlantic Ocean fostered resort communities with public and private parks and other outdoor recreation areas. Farmers tilled the soil and raised livestock among the hills and valleys of northern and western Rhode Island that rise between 500 and 800 feet.

Rhode Island divides into a physical and geographic landscape of four distinct regions that are significant for understanding and organizing Rhode Island's recreation system. Distinctive soil type, topography, geology, and water features characterize each region: the coastal plain, the Narragansett Bay area, the lowlands, and the hilly interior uplands. See Figure 2-1.1 below.

The coastal plain includes terminal moraines, outwash plains, barrier beaches, flat sandy beaches and extensive salt ponds and salt marshes. Agriculture in this region began in the seventeenth century. The extensive salt marshes were valuable sources of hay. This region has seen extensive development for summer communities and turf farms are the most active agricultural type.

The land in the Narragansett Bay area including all of the coastal communities and the islands in the Bay, contains both rocky coast and fertile glacial plain soils. These feature and good harbors resulted in the region's early settlement and a long horticultural and agricultural tradition. Because of long-time dense settlement, these communities also offer the greatest number and variety of

Figure 2-1.1 Geographic Regions of Rhode Island



designed landscapes. Agricultural pursuits, consistently pressured by real-estate development, include a variety of farm types mixed with many farms with fields maintained as open space to provide scenic settings for homes.

Undulating southwest to northeast from Westerly to Cumberland, Rhode Island's lowlands include a long, wide band of gently rolling terrain at elevations from just above sea level to 400 feet. This intermediate zone between the bay and coastal plain and the interior uplands is characterized with rolling hills and fair to good agricultural soils, often interspersed with boulders or glacial ledge. Although the northern extremes of this region are heavily urbanized and the western portions are suburbanized, there are orchards and farm in these areas. The southern part of RI, particularly Washington and Newport Counties, are home to many dairy, market and turf farms, as well as nurseries and vineyards.

The interior upland region which includes most of northwestern Rhode Island is characterized by rocky hills ranging in elevation from 250-800 feet. Many large ponds, reservoirs and river headlands feed this region. One of the last regions to be settled for intensive agriculture, this area has also seen, until recently, the least intensive suburbanization. Though possessing the least fertile of Rhode Island's agricultural soils, the region is suitable for pasturing, fruit orchards, and forest products.



2-2 Natural Resources

Waterbodies and Wetlands

Rhode Island has approximately 420 miles of saltwater coastline that provides many opportunities for boating, swimming, fishing and shellfishing, waterskiing, windsurfing and more. The long, sandy ocean beaches of the southern shore draw over 1.9 million visitors each year, including many out of state visitors. There are hundreds of public access sites to the Rhode Island coast.

Rhode Island's freshwater swamps, marshes, bogs, ponds, lakes, reservoirs, and 1,498 miles of rivers and streams attract kayakers, canoeists, swimmers and fishermen as well as motor boaters and jet skiers.

In addition to providing recreation; open space; and educational and scientific research opportunities, wetlands also perform critical functions including flood and storm water control; erosion and sedimentation control; water quality maintenance; recharge of groundwater supplies; discharge of groundwater; fish and wildlife habitat; nutrient production and cycling.¹

Forests

In 1998, forests covered 59 percent of Rhode Island's land or 393,000 acres, a decline from 1985 when there were 411,800 acres of forest. Forests provide important benefits to Rhode Island citizens like recreational opportunities and



wildlife habitat. One of the most important roles is protecting the supply of clean water. Rural and urban residents appreciate the scenery that forests provide. The forests also supply timber products, firewood, and non-timber forest products such as witch hazel and floral greenery.

At the turn of the 21st century, the greatest threat to sustaining healthy forest in Rhode Island is the expansion of urban and suburban areas. In the coming years, the role of forests in protecting water supplies, as places to recreate, and as components of urban environments will be increasingly important. Private landowners own about 77 percent of the forested land in Rhode Island. The increasing parcelization, the breaking up of large undeveloped tracts of land into smaller parcels that are in susceptible to development, increase the fragmentation of habitat.

The State continues to acquire forestland especially significant parcels or those abutting current state forests. Other forestlands are owned and managed by municipalities, non-profit groups such as the Audubon Society and The Nature Conservancy, land trusts, and private landowners.

Farms

Rhode Island farms are attracting more visitors with farm stands, pick your own fields and orchards, farmers' markets, and attractions such as corn mazes and

¹ RIDEM, 2002 State of the State's Waters Report (305b)

hayrides. According to 1997 USDA statistics, there were over 735 farms in Rhode Island occupying over 55,236 acres (of which 25,611 acres was cropland). Rhode Island agriculture is generally healthy, and is ranked first nationally in net farm income per acre.

Wildlife

Migrating and wintering waterfowl, neotropical migrants, butterflies, dragonflies, fish, and plants attract visitors and residents. DEM maintains six Management Areas that provide opportunities for wildlife observation. The Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor is a linear park that provides a variety of experiences. It includes historical elements, natural areas and paved bike paths along the river. In addition to the DEM Management Areas there are several other wildlife preserves in the state. The US Fish and Wildlife Service maintains five wildlife refuges in RI. The Audubon Society of Rhode Island operates ten staffed wildlife refuges. Save The Bay is planning a nature center on the Providence waterfront.



Coastal Islands

Coastal Islands provide a variety of shorelines including, sand, cobble and boulders, rocky shores, cliffs, and salt ponds. They provide important bird nesting sites and are valued for fishing and sailing. The Bay Islands Park System provides another type of wildlife watching experience. The Narragansett Bay Estuarine Research Reserve on Prudence Island Learning Center is a joint project of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), DEM and the Audubon Society of Rhode Island.

2-3 Historical/Cultural Resources

Major historic/cultural resources include pre-revolution era homes, churches, and in Newport, Providence, Bristol and Warren, early forts around Narragansett Bay, and important Industrial Revolution mills and homes throughout the state, particularly in the Blackstone, Pawtuxet, Woonasquatucket and Moshassuck valleys. Newport is famous for its mansions. Many elegant 19th century commercial and residential buildings can be seen throughout the state.

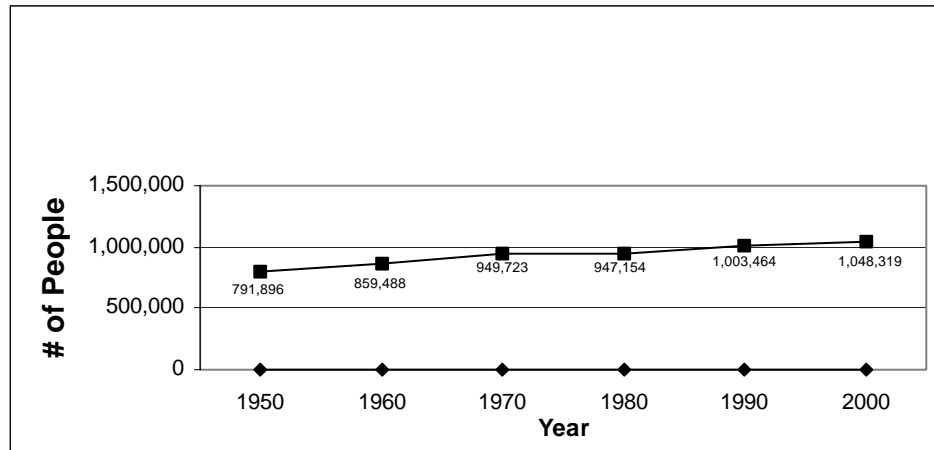
Some of RI's state parks are unique in their historical heritage. Fort Adams in Newport contains a pre-Civil War fort, the largest coastal fortification in the United States, started in 1820. Colt State Park retains the air of the elegant private estate created by Samuel Colt, and includes multiple use sports fields and a historic working farm. Goddard Memorial State Park offers horseback riding, golf, and picnicking under the magnificent trees on its 489 acre grounds. It is a favorite site for reunions, weddings, and festivals. The bridle paths and beaches of Lincoln Woods are a magnet for horseback riders, hikers, joggers and swimmers only ten minutes north of Providence, while its boulders challenge a growing number of rock climbers.



2-4 Population

The demographic trends in Rhode Island from 1990 to 2000 were up – more people, higher income, better educated, more people with college degrees, and more Hispanic people. The number of young people (under 18) grew by one percent while the number of people over that age dropped by under one percent. Rhode Island still ranks third in the nation for population over age 65.

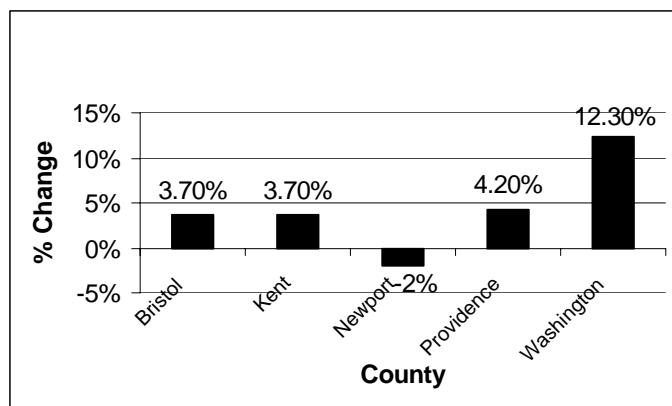
Figure 2-4.1 Population Change 1950-2000



Rhode Island's population increased by 4.5 percent in the 1990's from 1,003,464 to 1,048,319. This growth, while modest compared to the national average of 13.1%, is quite significant for Rhode Island. Figure 2-4.1 shows Rhode Island's population growth since 1950.

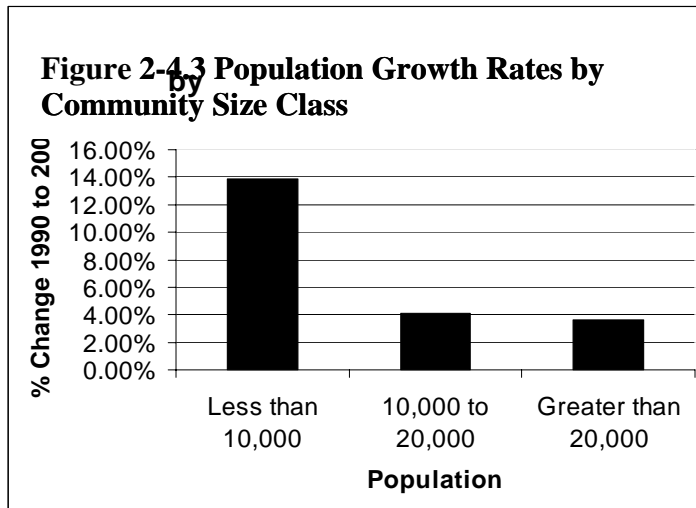
Rhode Island's population distribution provides an interesting contrast. The state's population density of 1,003 people per square mile is one of the highest in the country, yet Rhode Island ranks twelfth in the fifty states in percentage of land that is forested. The explanation for this apparent inconsistency is that most of the population lives in the center of the state in a highly populated, relatively narrow, urban/suburban corridor between the shores of the Blackstone River and Narragansett Bay, twenty miles wide and stretching about 44 miles from Woonsocket to Narragansett.

Figure 2-4.2 % Population Change by County



As can be seen in the Figure 2-4.2, the largest population increases since 1990 have taken place in Washington County in the southern part of the state, which is host to salt water beaches and the largest state management areas.

The geographic decentralization of population throughout the 1980's and 1990's



was a major dynamic affecting the open space and recreation resource base. The population growth rate for rural small towns (those with under 10,000 people as of 1990) rose by more than three times the rate of growth for larger towns (those with populations over 10,000 as of 1990). Figure 2-4.3 illustrates the relative rates of population growth for different population size classes.

Four of five leading communities in terms of 1990-2000 population growth rates (percentage change) were rural: West Greenwich (45.6 %), Richmond (35.0 %), Charlestown (21.3 %), and New Shoreham (20.8 %). The fifth was the suburb of Lincoln (15.8 %). In terms of absolute increase, Providence (12,890), Cranston (3,209), South Kingstown (3,290), Lincoln (2,853), and Cumberland (2,802) were the five fastest growing communities in the '90's.

Rhode Island's population is slightly older than the nation's (36.7 years vs. 35.3 years). Fourteen and one-half percent of population was age 65 and older in 2000, a slight decrease from the fifteen percent in 1990. Despite the decrease, the percent of population over 65 ranks third highest in nation. The 2000 census shows that over half the population is in the 25 to 64 year age group. Table 2-4.1 below shows the distribution by age class.

Table 2-4.1 Population Profile by Age Group – 2000 Census

Age Group	Population	Percent
Under 18 years	247,651	23.6
18 to 24 years	107,036	10.2
25 to 44 years	310,613	29.6
45 to 64 years	230,861	22.0
65 years and older	152,158	14.5
TOTAL	1,048,319	99.9

Table 2-4.2 shows that Rhode Island and the nation exhibited similar age group population trends during the last decade, with increases in population under 18 years, and slight decreases in population between 18 and 64 years, and over 65 years.

Table 2-4.2 Population Change Between 1990 and 2000 by Age Group

Age Group	Rhode Island	National
Under 18 years	+ 1.1 %	+0.1 %
18 to 64 years	- 0.7 %	- 0.1 %
Over 65 years	- 0.5 %	- 0.2 %

The 2000 census shows that Hispanics make up 8.7 percent of Rhode Island's population, and are the largest and fastest growing ethnic group in the state. This sharp growth contributed to large population gains in central cities such as Providence and Central Falls. Table 2-4.3 shows Rhode Island's population by race/ethnicity.

The median family income in Rhode Island increased by 34.7 % in the ten year period prior to 2000, to \$52,781. The percentage of families with incomes of less than \$50,000 decreased during the ten year time period, while percentages of families with higher incomes increased, with the largest increases in the \$75,000 to \$99,999 family income group (96.9 %) and \$100,000 to \$150,000 (198.8 %) family income group.

In 2000, 32.6 % of the Rhode Island population 25 years old or older possessed a college degree, an increase from 27.6 % of the population in 1990. There was a corresponding decrease in the population that held high school diplomas or less.

Table 2-4.3 Population by Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	% of Total Population
White	85.0%
Black/African American	4.5%
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.5%
Asian	2.3%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.1%
Other	5.0%
Two or More Races	2.7%
Hispanic	8.7%

The changing population in Rhode Island presents both challenges and opportunities in the development and management of recreational resources. For example, significant population growth over the next five to ten years could lead to continued over-crowding at some existing facilities and the need for new facilities. The changing age distribution means that more passive recreation opportunities will be needed for middle-age and elderly people such paved walking/biking trails, beaches, picnic areas, and natural areas. At the same time, more activities and related facilities such as basketball and volleyball courts,

playgrounds, and various types of playing fields will be needed by youth. Finally, changes in ethnic diversity require modification in how we operate facilities (i.e. increase bi-lingual signage and staff) as well how we allocate resources in the recreation grant selection project (i.e. encourage projects that directly benefit minority communities).



2-5 The Recreation System

Rhode Island offers a diverse array of recreation opportunities to its residents and visitors.

Many federal, state and local agencies, each with unique roles and responsibilities, work in partnership to maintain the state's recreation system. Federal or state operated facilities normally offer statewide benefits available to all Rhode Island residents or visitors, such as state parks, beaches and management areas and wildlife reserves. Municipally operated facilities and programming benefit primarily the residents of the sponsoring municipality with such offerings as softball or soccer fields, tennis courts, and playgrounds. Private/non-profit entities also provide outdoor recreation activities available to the public such as golfing, camping and downhill skiing.

Federal Agencies

Federal agencies involved in outdoor recreation include the National Park Service (NPS), US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFW), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service. Federal roles in outdoor recreation include the management of federally owned properties and the administration of financial and technical assistance programs to aid state and local agencies. The NPS operates the 4.5 acre Roger Williams National Memorial in Providence. USFW manages 2,109 acres of conservation and wildlife refuges in 5 areas along the Rhode Island coast.

Federal agencies provide substantial funding for Rhode Island's recreation system. A significant amount of funding has come from the FHWA which contributed approximately \$30.4 million dollars toward the development bike paths and trails and the enhancement of historic and scenic resources. FHWA funds usually provided 80 percent of the total project cost with the state providing the remaining 20 percent. USFW provides \$3.2 million each year to protect lands critical to fish and wildlife habitats and water quality and to improve fishing and fishing access. The National Park Service Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) provides approximately \$1 million annually to fund the development and maintenance of park and recreation facilities. LWCF funds are divided equally between state and local projects.



Table 2-5.1 Funding Programs Supporting Land Acquisition and Outdoor Recreation in Rhode Island

Agency/Program	Purpose	FY 2003 Amount (in millions)
FEDERAL		
Federal Highway Administration	Design and construction of bike paths and trails	8.4
FHWA Bikeway Program	Development and improvement of scenic and historic resources.	3.7
Transportation Enhancements	Development and improvement of new and existing multi-user trails	0.55
Recreational trails		2.5
CMAQ		
USFW	Enhance, protect and manage fish and their habitats;	3.2
Sport Fish and Wildlife	restore and improve wildlife habitat	
Restoration	Conservation of lands, water, water quality	
North American Coastal		
Wetlands Conservation Grants		
Forest Legacy	Acquire easements or fee simple to protect the state's forests resources	
Land & Water Conservation Fund	Acquisition and development of outdoor recreation lands and facilities	1.43
North American Wetlands Conservation	Acquire easements or fee title to protect waterfowl habitat	1.0
Urban Parks and Recreation Recovery Program	Rehabilitation of existing indoor and outdoor recreational facilities in urban areas	0
US Department of Agriculture	Acquisition of development rights to agricultural land	1.0
STATE		
State Bond Funds		
Land Acquisition	State open space preservation	2.5
	Local open space preservation	2.5
Agricultural Land Preservation Program	Agricultural land protection through purchase of development rights	1.0
Greenways	Regional and local linear open space acquisition and development	2.0
Distressed communities	Park land acquisition and development in urban areas	0.5
Restricted revenues		
Fish and Wildlife	Operating budgets, land acquisition and capital improvements, fishing and hunting access and to provide match for federal Fish and Wildlife funds	
Natural heritage/open space	No-interest loans for land acquisition	0.3
Rhode Island Water Resources Board Surcharge for Watershed Protection	Acquisition of land or interests in land that protect surface and ground water.	
PRIVATE/NONPROFIT		
The Nature Conservancy/Champlin Foundations and local land trusts	Land acquisition and Recreation facility development	Varies annually 3 to 5 million

State Agencies

Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management provides recreation opportunities on its public lands and also provides financial and technical assistance to municipalities and other governmental agencies. DEM is also the primary agency responsible for management of state-owned recreational resources.

The Department manages 60,000 acres of land in forest and wildlife management areas, state parks and beaches, trails, and bike paths. This is 8.6 percent of the land area of the state. Of this acreage, DEM has twenty-three management areas that cover 45,000 acres that are predominately forestland but include water bodies and open fields. The combined worth of DEM facilities is about \$701 million. These facilities attract more than 6 million visitors each year, including many out-of-staters who bring significant tourism dollars into Rhode Island.

DEM solicited proposals to build a water park at Snake Den State Park in Johnston, about 10 miles west of Providence. The 1,100 acre parcel includes the working historic Dame Farm and the headquarters for DEM's Division of Parks and Recreation.

A significant amount of support for these facilities is provided by DEM operating budgets. The DEM Parks and Recreation Division, is exclusively devoted to operating and maintaining public recreational facilities. Fish and Wildlife and Forest Environment are stewards of natural resources, but a significant portion of their budgets is spent on operating recreational facilities or supporting public recreational activities. The Planning and Development section supports these efforts by operating the land acquisition program which works with The Nature Conservancy, the Champlin Foundations, the Agricultural Land Preservation Commission, the Forest Legacy Program, municipalities and land trusts to acquire land, development rights to

**Table 2-5.2 Major State Facilities
Managed by DEM**

Beaches

Charlestown Breachway – Camp Area
East Beach – Camp Area – Barrier Beach Permit
East Matunuck State Beach
Misquamicut State Beach*
Salty Brine State Beach
Scarborough North & South Beaches*
Roger C. Wheeler State Beach*

Parks & Other Recreation Facilities

Beavertail State Park
Blackstone River Bikeway
Brenton Point State Park
Burlingame State Park
Burlingame State Campground
Colt State Park
East Bay Bike Path
Fisherman's Memorial State Park & Campground
Fort Adam's State Park*
Fort Wetherill State Park
Goddard Memorial State Park
Haines Memorial State Park
Lincoln Woods State Park
Snake Den State Park
World War II Memorial State Park*
Arcadia Management Area
George Washington Management Area

*Denotes major renovations since 1992 SCORP.



and, and conservation easements. The Division also provides planning, design and oversight of consultants in the development of recreational facilities. The Strategic Planning and Policy section provides planning and policy documents such as the 2001 Asset Management Plans for forest management areas and parks and beaches and this SCORP. Funding for these divisions comes from the state general fund and restricted revenues.

The 2001 Asset Management Plans show, however, that annual operating and maintenance budgets fall short and there is a backlog of 206 unfunded priority repair and replacement projects at a cost of more than \$10.6 million in repair and replacement costs. DEM is pursuing alternative funding sources such as reinstating state park fees, raising user fees to market prices, leasing out facilities and procuring private support from partnerships with corporations.

DEM is a major funding partner for local parks. See Table 2-5.6 on page 2.17.

DEM and Rhode Island Department of Transportation Partnership on Bikeways

In the 1980's the State developed independent bike paths. In 1994, the State greenways plan called for a more holistic system of connected natural greenways including bike paths and trails. Today the vision of a statewide greenway network is well underway with more than 46 miles of bikeways and greenways open to the public.

DEM, the Rhode Island Department of Transportation and local municipalities share responsibility for state bikeways. DEM and DOT design bike trails in partnership and DOT constructs them with FHWA funding. DEM or municipalities are responsible for planning, operating, and maintaining the bikeways.

Table 2-5.3 Rhode Island's Bike Paths & Greenways²

Name /Location	Mileage	Status
East Bay Bike Path	14.5 miles	Open
Blackstone River Bikeway	6.3 miles 11.7 miles	Open Under design
Cranston Bike Path	5.5 miles	Open
Woonasquatucket River Bikeway/ Northwest Bike Trail	1,800 feet 3.93 miles	Open Under design
Ten Mile River Bikeway	1.5 miles 2 miles	Open Under design
Warwick/West Warwick Greenway	4 miles	Open
South County Bicycle Path	3.5 miles 2 miles 2 miles	Open Construction underway Under design
Coventry Greenway	2 miles	Three bridges to be redecked and 2 miles to be paved
Trestle Trail, Coventry	10 miles	Under design
Jamestown Verazzano Bridge Bicycle/Pedestrian Access		Design with alternatives complete, working with host towns to select preferred alternative

Rhode Island's first major bikeway project, following the former Providence & Worcester Bristol-Secondary Rail line was the 15 mile East Bay Bike Path, from Providence to Bristol, that opened in 1986. Construction of the Blackstone River Bikeway that will eventually extend from Providence, Rhode Island to Worcester, Massachusetts is underway. To date, two segments, totaling 7 miles following the Blackstone Canal tow path have been completed. Additional segments of the bikeway are anticipated to be underway between 2004-2006.

Other projects initiated by the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) that traverse abandoned rail corridors include the Washington Secondary/Trestle Trail, South County and Woonasquatucket River Bikeways. Also, to ensure an inter-connecting system of bike paths and on-road bike routes, sections of some state and local roads have been striped as bicycle routes. Striped roadways include urban routes such as Allens Avenue and Promenade Street in Providence and Narragansett Boulevard in Cranston, and rural routes such as sections of Routes 117 and 102 and Scituate Avenue. The Warwick/East Greenwich Bicycle Network will consist of bike route signage on approximately 40 miles of city and state roadways, and the design of three neighborhood bikeway bridge connections.

To date, 42 miles of off-road shared-use bike paths have been constructed and opened to the public.

² Information from Department of Transportation website, Bike RI webpages

Rhode Island Water Resources Board

The Rhode Island Water Resources Board owns and maintains the 8600 acre Big River Management Area (BRMA). BRMA is the largest publicly owned land parcel in Rhode Island. Its borders extend through portions of the towns of West Greenwich, East Greenwich, Coventry, and Exeter. Largely undeveloped, the land was originally condemned for water supply purposes. The lands are now considered open space and provide recreation opportunities including hunting, fishing, hiking, canoeing of Big River and horseback riding.

Other State Agencies

The Rhode Island Public Transit Authority provides transportation to many recreational venues, including summer beach bus routes as well as a Rack N' Ride program for cyclists. Most RIPTA buses are equipped with bike racks. The Rhode Island Department of Health promotes the Rhode Island Prevention Coalition's Path to Health program which marks fitness and walking routes in urban locations.

Local Agencies

The organizations that play the biggest role in day to day recreation are local governments. Rhode Island law authorizes municipal governments to establish public recreation systems and requires each community to develop a Local Comprehensive Plan (LCP) that includes an open space and recreation element that is consistent with state plans. Eligibility to participate in federal and state recreation grant programs is based on the adequacy of a community's LCP. See Appendix A, Rhode Island Grant Selection Process (RGSP) for more information. Table 2-5.5 shows \$26 million in State-supported local recreation and open space projects since 1992.

Table 2-5.4 Percent of Facilities Operated by Schools	
Local Amenity	% Operated by Schools
Baseball Fields	34%
Football Fields	68%
Running Tracks	58%
Soccer Fields	35%
Softball Fields	23%
Outdoor Basketball Courts	37%
Tennis Courts	45%
Multi-Use Fields	52%
Playgrounds	34%
Schools often work with municipal recreation departments to provide recreational programs. In many cases, a school will provide the facility, and the parks and recreation department provides the staffing and administration of a program or vice versa.	

According to the Directory of City – Town Officials 2002, thirty-five of the state's thirty-nine communities have official park and/or recreation directors or departments. The four communities that do not list official directors or departments rely on volunteer committees, contract staff, local land trusts, local sports organizations and/or other town departments such as planning or public works to oversee recreation facilities and programs.

Local communities manage 13,017 acres of recreational facilities. They have also joined with local partners to protect more than 30,000 acres of open space. Local recreation facilities include mostly multi-purpose parks, playgrounds,

Table 2-5.5 - State Investment in Local Recreation and Land Acquisition Since 1992				
City/Town	Recreation	Land Protection		Total
	Grants	Grants	Loans	
Barrington	\$ 362,628	\$ 300,000		\$ 662,628
Bristol	\$ 575,000	\$ 935,000		\$ 1,510,000
Burrillville	\$ 577,628	\$ 15,375		\$ 593,003
Central Falls	\$ 438,743			\$ 438,743
Charlestown		\$ 530,000		\$ 530,000
Coventry	\$ 268,019	\$ 217,750		\$ 485,769
Cranston	\$ 315,000	\$ 19,125		\$ 334,125
Cumberland	\$ 432,000	\$ 687,764		\$ 1,119,764
East Greenwich	\$ 150,000	\$ 300,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 550,000
East Providence	\$ 567,613	\$ 400,000	\$ 200,000	\$ 1,167,613
Exeter	\$ 25,000	\$ 126,900		\$ 151,900
Glocester	\$ 440,213	\$ 484,084		\$ 924,297
Hopkinton	\$ 51,668			\$ 51,668
Jamestown	\$ 30,000	\$ 157,219	\$ 173,383	\$ 360,602
Johnston	\$ 450,000			\$ 450,000
Lincoln	\$ 76,175	\$ 1,056,374		\$ 1,132,549
Little Compton		\$ 800,000	\$ 101,000	\$ 901,000
Middletown	\$ 198,975	\$ 700,000		\$ 898,975
Narragansett	\$ 60,600	\$ 250,000		\$ 310,600
New Shoreham	\$ 274,000	\$ 400,000	\$ 150,000	\$ 824,000
Newport	\$ 500,000	\$ 400,000		\$ 900,000
North Kingstown	\$ 339,006	\$ 300,000		\$ 639,006
North Providence	\$ 439,350			\$ 439,350
North Smithfield	\$ 384,528			\$ 384,528
Pawtucket	\$ 1,007,386			\$ 1,007,386
Portsmouth	\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000		\$ 400,000
Providence	\$ 1,148,925			\$ 1,148,925
Richmond			\$ 88,500	\$ 88,500
Scituate	\$ 135,000			\$ 135,000
Smithfield	\$ 300,000	\$ 164,150	\$ 96,000	\$ 560,150
South Kingstown	\$ 870,373	\$ 1,577,169	\$ 308,000	\$ 2,755,542
Tiverton	\$ 22,599	\$ 865,000		\$ 887,599
Warwick	\$ 815,100	\$ 81,500		\$ 896,600
Warren	\$ 47,140			\$ 47,140
West Greenwich		\$ 213,992		\$ 213,992
West Warwick	\$ 165,000	\$ 151,875		\$ 316,875
Westerly	\$ 1,125,000	\$ 615,872		\$ 1,740,872
Woonsocket	\$ 525,000			\$ 525,000
	\$13,317,668	\$ 11,949,149	\$1,216,883	\$ 26,483,700

community centers, and sports fields and courts. Municipalities also offer a wide variety of recreational programming from team sports, individual sports, summer recreation programs and camps for youth, instructional classes, concerts and cultural events, and special programs for seniors or people with disabilities.

The major sources of funding for constructing municipal outdoor facilities come from state and local bond funds, National Park Service Land and Water Conservation Funds, and private partners. Local taxes provide funds to operate

and maintain local facilities. Park and recreation officials report that operating and maintenance budgets fall short and are calling for a collaborative effort to respond to this need.

Private/Non-Profit Agencies

Although the 2003 SCORP does not include data on private/non-profit (except for private golf courses), it is important to note the private sector plays a significant role in outdoor recreation in Rhode Island, providing facilities such as campgrounds, golf courses, marinas, beaches and tourist attractions. Many non-profits such as environmental organizations, land trusts, youth organizations, and churches provide programs and/or resources and facilities on their lands for free use by the public. The private sector also provides services and/or facilities at state parks on a short-term or seasonal basis such as sailboat lessons and rentals and concession stands as well as major music festivals such as the Jazz Festival at Fort Adams State Park.

Private non-profit organizations and local land trusts are playing an increasingly important role as partners in recreation and land acquisition. Rhode Island's land trusts have blossomed in the last ten years from 15 to 43. The Nature Conservancy Rhode Island Field Office provides support to the local land trusts and works closely with DEM on land preservation. The Champlin Foundation provides between \$3 and \$5 million dollars annually to DEM and The Nature Conservancy for land acquisition and awards grants to municipalities and local recreation organizations. The Audubon Society of Rhode Island owns or protects over 9,000 acres of property in and around the state. Many properties are open to the public for hiking and observing nature. Through refuge acquisition and maintenance, ASRI plays an important role in the preservation of diverse habitats. Non-profit organizations have also played a pivotal role in open space and recreation by advocating for state bond funding, laws and regulations.



152-3 RECREATION NEEDS ANALYSIS

This part assesses the supply and demand for recreation in Rhode Island, as required by the National Park Service. The Rhode Island assessment consists of a comprehensive inventory of public facilities, maps that compare facilities to national standards by city and town, and surveys of state and local recreation directors, park and beach users, and the general public. The inventory and survey do suggest some trends and issues that are outlined in the latter part of this section, including the need for new and upgraded recreation facilities, more resources to operate and maintain facilities, better public information and education about recreation opportunities and improved access. This part concludes with a brief discussion of requests from off-road vehicle riders for greater access to public lands.

This plan does not include a numerical comparison of supply and demand for outdoor recreation facilities. Most states have moved away from the complex numerical modeling used in the past. While the lack of resources to support such detailed analysis is clearly a factor, an additional consideration is dissatisfaction with the efficiency and efficacy of such analyses.



They typically involved painstaking and lengthy data collection mechanisms, complicated models, detailed and expensive empirical analysis and required planners to make assumptions about future recreational behavior which were often no more than educated guesses. In addition, supply/demand needs analyses often yielded results which were clearly at odds with other (sometimes more current) information available to planners. Taking the place of quantitative demand/supply studies are methods which are more customer focussed such as advisory committees and surveys.

The information in this chapter should be used as an initial screen in evaluating whether or not new facilities are needed. Many factors outside of this analysis should be looked at before undertaking recreation projects (i.e. the ability to support facilities in the long-term). It is also important to note that each

community in Rhode Island is unique and specific needs are considered on an individual basis.

3-1 Supply

Inventory of Rhode Island Outdoor Recreation Facilities

In the summer of 2001 the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) conducted a survey of recreation facility managers to update its database of all the outdoor recreation facilities in the state. Thirty-eight of the 39 municipalities in Rhode Island and the four DEM divisions that operate park and recreation facilities provided updated information. The level of detail and thoroughness of the information provided varied. The facilities for which we did not receive updated information remain in the 1989 database and were not included in the 2002 inventory.

**Table 3-1.1- Rhode Island Outdoor Recreation Inventory, 2002
Statewide Summary by Jurisdiction**

	Jurisdiction				Total
	Federal	State	Local	Private	
Number of Sites	6	123	934	50	1113
Acreage	1528	56752	12942	NA	71223
Game Fields (number)	0	41	544	NA	585
Tennis Courts (number)	0	33	405	NA	438
Salt Beach (linear footage)	0	30800	37880	NA	68680
Fresh Beach (linear footage)	0	2065	2255	NA	4320
Public Pools (number)	0	0	11	NA	11
Boat Ramps (number)	0	47	32	NA	79
Campsites (number)	0	1293	249	NA	1542
Picnic Tables (number)	0	1373	717	NA	2090
Golf Holes (number)	0	9	63	756	828
Bicycle Trails (miles)	0	21	25	NA	46

Of the more than 1100 facilities, 6 are federally-owned, 123 are owned by the State and 934 are owned by municipalities, or are State-owned but managed locally. Fifty privately-owned golf courses are included in the database because golfing is the most popular outdoor recreation activity that is provided by the private sector. No other privately-owned facilities were included.

Table 3-1.2 shows significant increases in the number of public amenities since 1989 with growth in 14 of 19 categories that mirror the activities that have become more popular over the last 10 years. The explosive growth in organized soccer leagues has led to a 214 percent increase in the number of multi-use fields in the state. This may also explain the loss of 23 football fields since many multi-use fields now accommodate both soccer and football. The increasing popularity of walking and biking for fitness has led to the development of many

more miles of bike trails and walking tracks. Other facilities such as skate parks and outdoor ice rinks, non-existent in the 1989 inventory, are increasing due to the popularity of skateboarding/BMX biking and ice skating.

Table 3-1.2 – Type and Number of Public Outdoor Recreation Amenities

Outdoor Amenities	2002 Inventory	1989 Inventory	Difference	%Change
Baseball Fields	504	447	57	13%
Basketball Courts	384	340	44	13%
Bike Trails (miles)	46	13.5	33	242%
Boat Ramps	79	76	3	4%
Football Fields	77	100	(23)	-23%
Freshwater Beaches	20	22	(2)	-9%
Golf Courses	55	46	9	20%
Ice Rinks	6	0	6	600%
Multi-Use Fields	204	65	139	214%
Picnic Areas	224	137	87	64%
Playgrounds	387	290	97	33%
Public Camp Sites	1293	1314	(21)	-2%
Public Pools	17	13	4	31%
Running Tracks	53	20	33	165%
Saltwater Beaches	43	42	1	2%
Skate Parks	9	0	9	900%
Soccer Fields	141	No Data	-	-
Tennis Courts	488	430	58	13%
Volleyball Courts	38	No Data	-	-

The inventory also provided information on the following:

- Of the more than 1100 facilities, fewer than seven percent (72) have educational programs in place. Of the 72 with educational programs, 39 are associated with school facilities.
- Only 37 percent of publicly owned facilities are within an eighth of a mile of a RIPTA bus route
- 50 percent or 551 of the 1,113 facilities report some type of handicap access, equipment or programming.

Inventory Mapping

Selected outdoor recreation facilities types were mapped. The maps include not only facilities that are at a compact site, such as ballfields, but also facilities that cover large areas, such as bike paths and open space and hunting areas. The maps, located in Appendix E include:

- Rhode Island Reference Maps show Rhode Island's population density, watershed regions, open space, town lines, rural, suburban or urban areas, and minority and low-income communities, and accessibility of recreation facilities by Rhode Island Public Transportation Authority (RIPTA) bus route.
- Distribution Maps depict the locations for 18 types of outdoor recreation amenities in Rhode Island.
- Deficit Maps¹ identify areas that are below, meet or exceed the recommended outdoor recreation standards for the number of outdoor recreation facilities per person by census tract. These maps compare existing facilities to recommended recreation standards developed by the National Recreation and Park Association (NPRA). However, it is important to note that NPRA moved away from absolute standards to a standard that focuses on a community definition of an acceptable level of service (LOS) guideline. LOS is a quantification of the park and recreation delivery *philosophy and policy* of a community. Some aspects are based on observation, intuition and/or educated guesses.
- Municipal Maps (sample in Appendix E) show outdoor recreation facilities for each municipality.



¹ *Deficit Calculation:* (RI amenity/person in a census tract) x (recreation standard for amenity/persons) = (number of amenities/recreation standard)

3-2 Demand

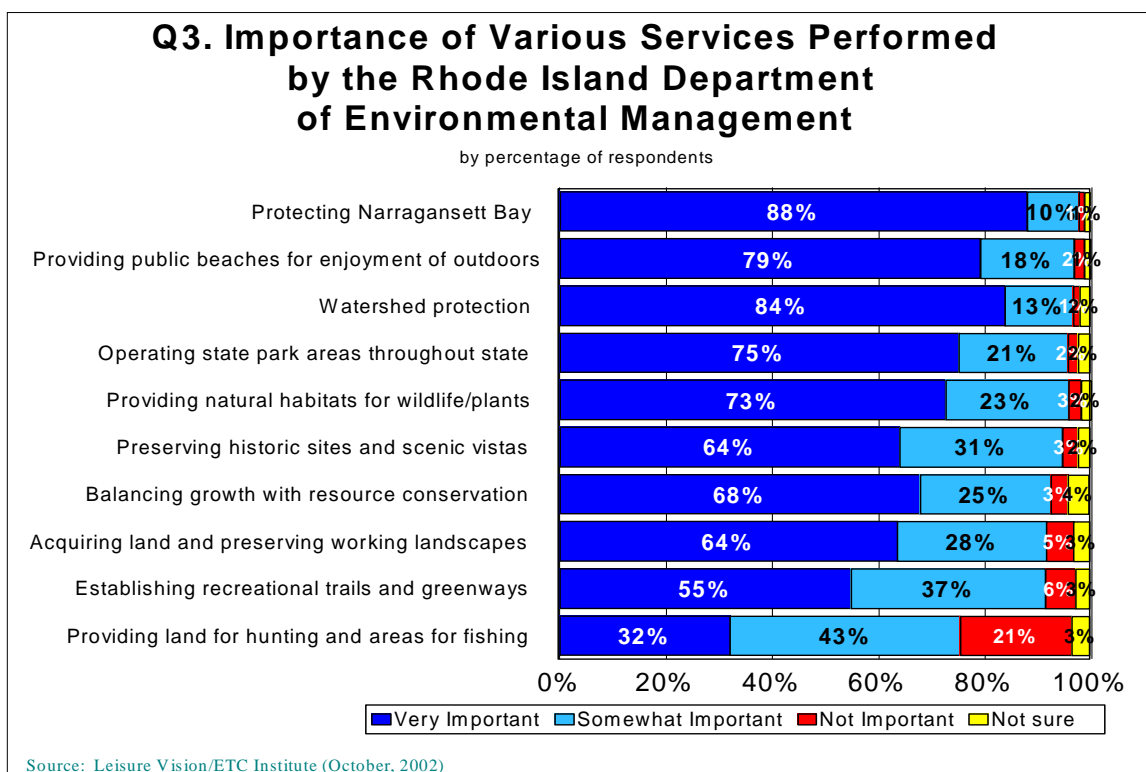
Public Outdoor Recreation Demand Survey

The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management contracted with Leisure Vision, Inc. of Olathe, Kansas to conduct a statewide attitude and interest survey to help determine citizen usage, satisfaction, needs, and priorities for outdoor recreation in the State of Rhode Island. The survey was designed to obtain statistically valid results from households throughout the State. Responses were received from 1408 households.

Major survey findings include:

- The services RIDEM offers are what Rhode Islanders consider important. Protecting Narragansett Bay, watershed protection, providing natural habitat and operating state parks were most important.

Figure 3-2.1

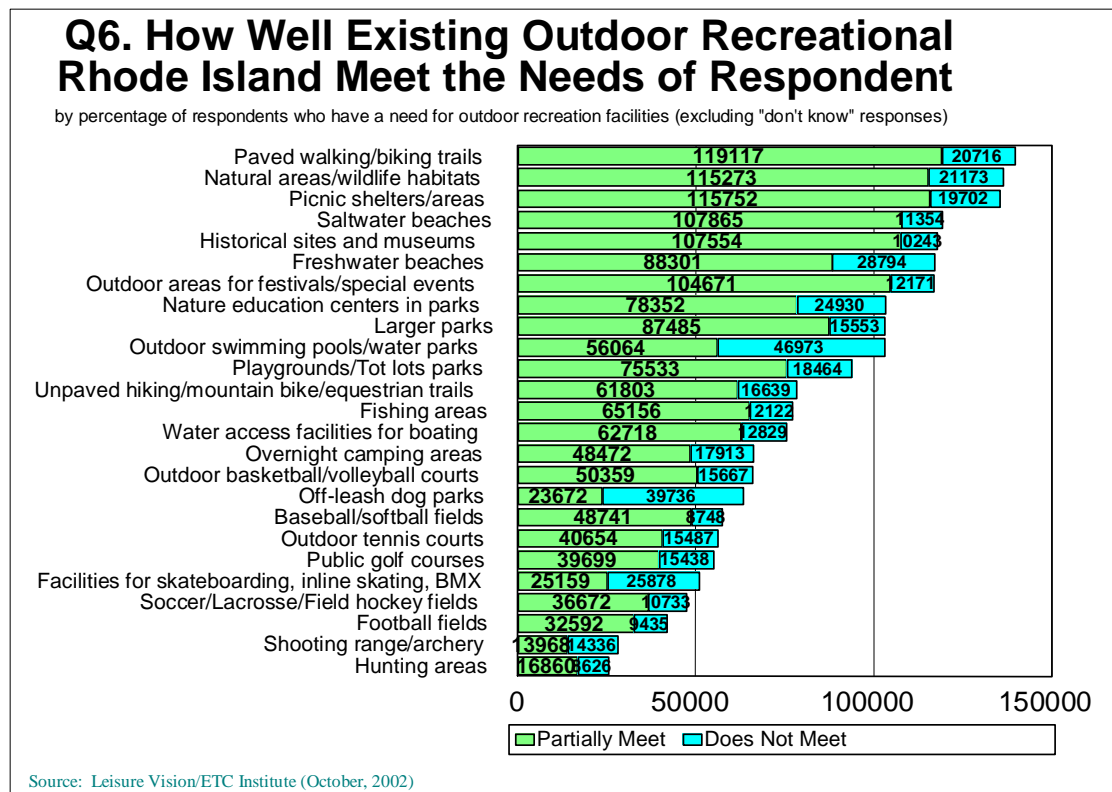


- Rhode Island state parks are well used. Eighty-percent (80%) of Rhode Islanders use our state parks compared to the national average of 70

percent. When respondents were asked what keeps them from using state parks more often, 22 percent indicated that over-crowding was a factor. Local parks are used by 72 percent of the respondents, which is comparable to the national average.

- Rhode Island could improve the condition of state parks. Although 79 percent of Rhode Islanders consider the overall condition of Rhode Island state parks excellent or good, 20 percent rated them as fair or poor, slightly higher than national averages.
- There are a wide variety of unmet needs for recreational services. Based on a list of 26 various outdoor facilities, respondents were asked to indicate which ones they have a need for. Then they were asked to indicate how well each met their need. The following chart shows the number of households whose needs are either partially being met or not being met at all based on 408,424 households across the State of Rhode Island.

Figure 3-2.2



- There is consensus on the strategic direction of recreation planning in Rhode Island. Respondents were asked to indicate the four most important out of

26 outdoor facilities to develop. Saltwater beaches and paved walking/biking trails had the highest percentage of respondents rate them as one of the four most important. The State has invested heavily in these two areas in the last ten years and will continue to do so.

- Rhode Islanders understand the link between participating in outdoor activities and their health. Over half (56 percent) indicated that participating in outdoor activities was very important to their health, and an additional 29 percent indicated it was important.
- Rhode Islanders want a balanced approach to funding outdoor recreation facilities. When asked how they would allocate \$100, respondents indicated: about one third would be spent on improvements and maintenance of existing facilities; one third would be spent on acquiring and developing walking, jogging and biking trails; and, one third would be spent on development of new facilities, including coastal beaches, game fields and special facilities.
- Rhode Islanders support establishing a dedicated funding source of park-generated revenue and tax revenues solely for maintenance and operations of State parks, beaches, trail and outdoor recreation areas. More than 78 percent of respondents indicated support for a dedicated fund.
- Rhode Islanders would support an outdoor family water park at Snake Den in Johnston. Over half (51 percent) of all respondents indicated they would visit such a facility. This response was driven primarily by age, with 82 percent under age 25, 70 percent ages 25 to 34, and 69 percent ages 35 to 44 indicating they would visit such a facility.



The table below shows the most popular activities based on the total number of activity days using participation rates and the average number of days a person participates in an activity for 2002 and estimated 2020.

Table 3-2.1 - Estimated Outdoor Recreation Demand of Rhode Island Residents

	%	Mean days	2002 Total	Estimated 2020
	Participation	per person	Demand*	Demand*
			(activity days)	(activity days)
Walking	66	140.5	97,210,621	97,976,756
Pleasure driving	39	65.8	26,901,962	27,113,982
Visiting coastal areas	61	41.9	26,793,985	27,005,154
Nature watching	31	67.9	22,066,067	22,239,973
Bicycling	35	58.8	21,574,405	21,744,437
Visiting beaches	64	31.5	21,134,111	21,300,673
Jogging/running	19	94.7	18,862,404	19,011,062
Playground activities	26	58.9	16,053,957	16,180,481
Salt-water swimming	47	21.4	10,543,993	10,627,092
Festivals/special events	50	17.5	9,172,791	9,245,084
Basketball (outdoor)	14	58.2	8,541,703	8,609,022
Fishing	22	35.5	8,187,371	8,251,898
Picnicking	42	17.6	7,749,174	7,810,247
Fresh-water swimming	27	25.6	7,245,981	7,303,088
Visiting historical sites	43	15.0	6,761,658	6,814,947
Baseball	11	55.5	6,399,987	6,450,427
Golf (any type)	18	33.1	6,245,885	6,295,110
Fresh-water fishing	17	30.9	5,506,820	5,550,220
Soccer	9	52.2	4,925,003	4,963,818
Softball	8	51.2	4,293,915	4,327,756
Motor boating	16	25.2	4,226,822	4,260,135
Football	8	47.5	3,983,612	4,015,008
Salt-water fishing	18	19.0	3,585,251	3,613,507
Tennis	10	30.1	3,155,440	3,180,309
Sailboating	11	27.1	3,125,039	3,149,668
In-line skating/BMX	6	46.6	2,931,100	2,954,200
Camping	17	15.3	2,726,678	2,748,167
Off road vehicle driving	4	63.6	2,666,924	2,687,942
All day hikes	14	16.9	2,480,323	2,499,871
Skeet or target shooting	3	65.1	2,047,367	2,063,503
Horseback riding	5	36.3	1,902,699	1,917,695
Canoeing/kayaking	15	12.0	1,886,974	1,901,846
Ice skating / hockey	8	20.0	1,677,310	1,690,530
Downhill skiing	7	19.3	1,416,279	1,427,441
Jet skiing	4	32.8	1,375,395	1,386,234
Water skiing	3	34.4	1,081,865	1,090,392
Hunting	3	21.4	673,021	678,325
Scuba diving/snorkeling	5	11.9	623,750	628,666
Surfing	3	13.9	437,149	440,594
Rock climbing	5	7.0	366,912	369,803
Cross country skiing	3	10.7	336,510	339,163
Snowmobiling	1	11.6	121,605	122,563
Rugby, lacrosse	1	7.9	82,817	83,470
Windsurfing	1	4.7	49,271	49,659
* Total estimated annual demand of Rhode Islanders, based on 2000 US Census total population of 1,048,319. 2020 population estimates are from Statewide Planning projections based on the 1990 census. Projections based on the 2000 census were not available at the time of this writing (12-17-02).				
Note: Figures include RI resident demand satisfied outside RI, but exclude demand of non-residents on RI areas.				

State and Municipal Recreation Directors Survey

The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management completed the *2001 Survey of Municipal and State Recreation Professionals* to better understand the recreation professional perspective on the public's needs for outdoor recreation. The survey was based on a survey used in the 1992 SCORP with additional questions on trails, transportation availability, funding levels and internet use. The main survey themes of facility supply, funding, planning and management remained unchanged. Major findings were:

- State and local recreation professionals report facing similar challenges regarding funding of staff and maintenance, accommodating competing user groups, and satisfying the demand for new outdoor recreation facilities.
- More than half of recreation directors (58 percent) and all State recreation managers report using Universal Design, or design that makes parks and beaches more accessible to all outdoor enthusiasts (the physically challenged, seniors, children, etc). Facilities are built with gentle sloping ramps, railings, wide seats, benches and sidewalks, reasonable stairs, etc.
- The internet is increasingly used to provide information on outdoor recreation facilities and activities available. However, some municipal and state facilities do not have comprehensive information posted. Additionally, interactive sites are uncommon on the web. Patrons do not have the opportunity to enroll in league sports or to book campground sites online. Since the survey, the State has added an online boating registration service.
- The public's preference for outdoor recreation activities is changing. Some traditional activities have declined in popularity since 1992 while others have surged in popularity. Recreation professionals try to accommodate these emerging trends by building new facilities, converting old facilities and creating new programs that satisfy user desires for outdoor recreation activities.
- Participants in outdoor recreation activities often disagree on how facilities should be used. They compete for court and field time, and have negative interactions on the beaches or trails. For example, horse riders complain that



mountain bikers startle their horses; families complain that teenage groups at the beach are too loud.

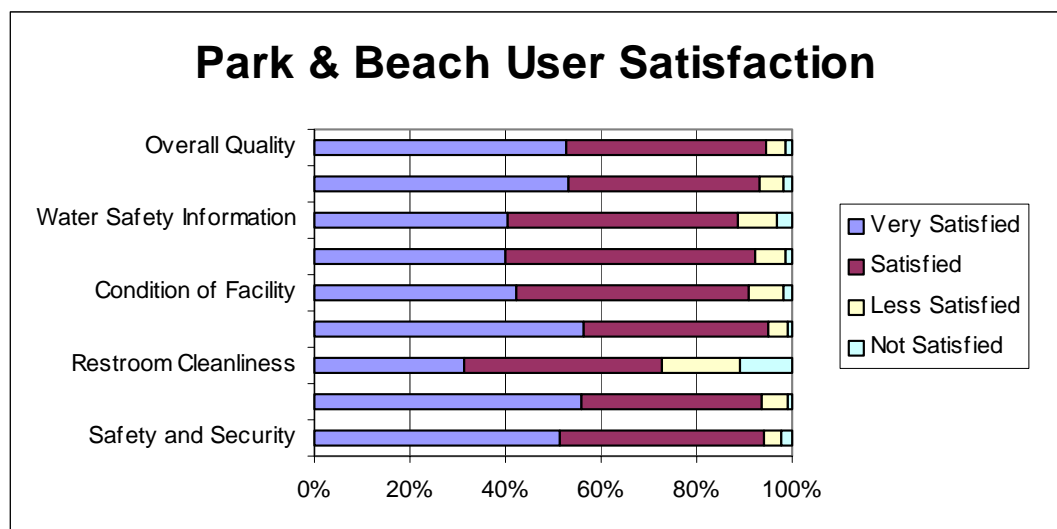
- Municipal directors report that the popularity of in-line skating activities has increased and will continue to do so. However, municipalities are not equipped with skating facilities to meet this demand. A related problem is that skaters use railings, steps and other infrastructure to skate on causing premature wear on properties. Building more skating facilities might take some of the pressure off other infrastructure.

Park and Beach User Survey

The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management surveyed more than 1,800 park and beach users in August and September of 2001 to identify the level of satisfaction and important concerns in the state park and beach system. A full report of the survey appears in Appendix C. Major survey findings include:

- Overall, users are satisfied with services at Rhode Island state parks and beaches. Respondents were asked to rate the level of satisfaction with 9 performance indicators. More than 90 percent of respondents indicated they were very satisfied or satisfied with 8 of the 9 performance indicators. Restroom cleanliness scored lower with only 70 percent of users indicating satisfaction. The mean response of participants revealed only slightly less satisfaction on weekends as opposed to weekdays, presumably as a result of more crowded conditions.

Figure 3-2.3





- Rhode Islanders rely heavily on private automobiles to travel to and from state parks and beaches. Eighty-four percent (84 percent) of respondents arrived at the park or beach in a motor vehicle on the day they participated in the survey, 7 percent walked, 4 percent biked, 2 percent used public transportation and 2 percent arrived by boat.
- State park and beach users visit facilities often. Over 70 percent of respondents visit state parks and beaches more than 5 times per year.
- The majority of users do not get information about state parks from the internet. Only 27 percent of respondents reported they used the internet to find information about the parks. This combined with a finding in the public demand survey that word of mouth was the most frequent way that respondents learned about recreation areas suggest an opportunity to promote the internet as a source of information for recreation in the State.

3-3 Common Threads – Findings and Recommendations on Critical Outdoor Recreation Needs

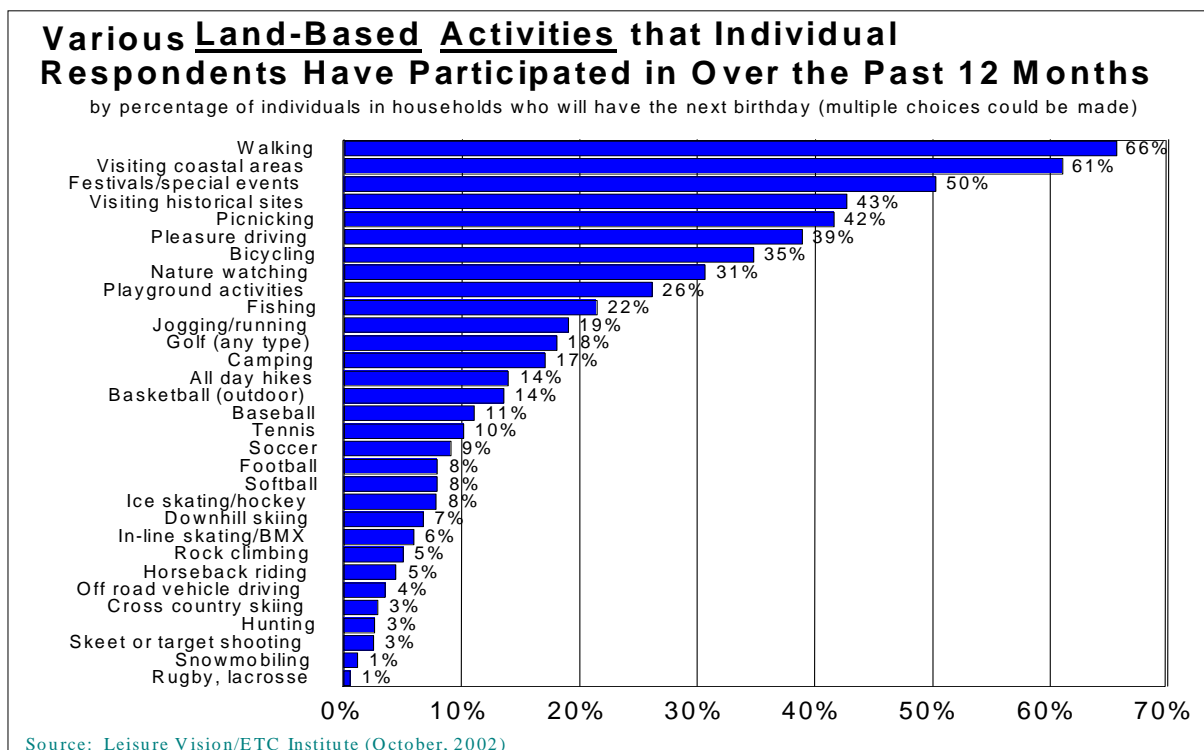
The following major findings and general conclusions on needs for outdoor recreation are based upon consideration of the diverse data sources described above as well as discussion among members of the SCORP Steering Committee.

Outdoor recreation is a vital component of the lives and health of Rhode Islanders. Rhode Islanders love the outdoors, and take part in a wide range of outdoor recreational activities ranging from walking and visiting coastal areas to traditional team sports and hunting and fishing. As diverse as the universe of activities is however, the common thread is access and utilization of land and water resources for relaxation, fulfillment, and enjoyment.

The most popular outdoor activities are those which are most accessible and simplest to engage in.

When it comes to recreation most people engage in outdoor physical activities that are readily available to them. The Outdoor Recreation Demand Survey found the top three activities in terms of total demand to be walking, visiting coastal areas and beaches and attending outdoor festivals and special events.

Figure 3-3.1





This is consistent with the advice of health professionals that we choose to engage in activities that are close to home and convenient to make it easy to maintain regular physical activity. Non-facility/equipment-dependent activities which are accessible to the broadest cross-section of the population, appear at or near the top of most lists of activity popularity.

The local recreation managers survey found organized sports to be highly popular among younger Rhode Islanders. The top three activities were soccer, baseball/softball and basketball. This finding should be interpreted within the context of the organized activities which local recreation systems provide, and does not conflict with a broader conclusion that readily accessible, easily engaged-in pursuits are most popular among Rhode Islanders as a whole.

Significant needs exist for new and upgraded recreation facilities.

Another common thread to all three surveys is the continuing need for investments in facilities. The 2002 inventory shows significant investment in recreation amenities since 1989 in areas where there is clearly high demand. Despite the increases, however, there is a continuing need for new investment. The general public survey indicates a need for more facilities such as saltwater beaches, paved walking and biking trails, off-leash dog parks and outdoor swimming pools and water parks. In addition to the need for more trails and outdoor swimming pools, recreation directors cited the lack of facilities for

emerging or popular outdoor recreation activities such as skateboarding as well as the need to add more athletic fields for organized sports activities.

Table 3-3.1 Recreation Facilities Rhode Island Needs or Needs More Of (in order of priority expressed in surveys)

	Recreation Directors	General Public
1	Skate/BMX/Inline Park	Paved Walking/Biking Trails
2	Soccer/Lacrosse Fields	Natural Areas/Wildlife Habitats
3	Pool/Swimming Facility	Picnic Shelters/Areas
4	Multi-Use Fields	Saltwater Beaches
5	Trails	Historical Sites and Museums
6	Playgrounds	Freshwater Beaches
7	Ice/Hockey Rink	Outdoor areas for Special Events
8	Exercise/Running Track	Nature Education Centers in Parks
9	Baseball	Larger Parks
10	Basketball	Outdoor Swimming Pools/Water Parks
11	Tennis Court	Playgrounds/Tot Lots/Parks
12	Softball	Unpaved Hiking/Mountain Bike/Equestrian Trails
13	Biking Trails	Fishing Areas
14	Recreation Center	Water Access Facilities for Boating
15	Football Field	Overnight Camping Areas
16	Athletic Fields	Outdoor Basket/Volleyball Courts
17	Teen Center	Off-leash Dog Parks
18	Picnic Shelters	Baseball/Softball Fields
19	Senior Center	Outdoor Tennis Courts
20	Ropes Course	Public Golf Courses
21	Public Boat Ramp	Facilities for Skateboarding/Inline Skating/BMX
22	Passive Rec Facilities	Soccer/Lacrosse/Field Hockey Fields
23	Outdoor Festival Area	Football Fields
24	Open Space	Shooting Range/Archery
25	Fishing	Hunting Areas
26	Dog Park	
27	Camp Sites	

According to the general public survey, urban residents cited overcrowding and distance as two of the top three reasons that keep them from using State parks and beaches. This combined with continuing water quality problems at the State's two major urban parks – Lincoln Woods and Goddard Park – are driving the State's plan to explore the feasibility of developing a new major water park at Snake Den Park in Johnston. DEM is working to improve water quality in the swimming area at Lincoln Woods. The Goddard Park problems are part of the Upper Narragansett Bay water quality problems and that are larger and more complex. The Narragansett Bay Commission's efforts to control combined sewer overflows in the Upper Bay, along with other local efforts, are projected to

eliminate and/or reduce water quality problems. The development of Snake Den State Park would also address the general public needs for seven out of the top ten facilities in the survey (picnic shelters, freshwater beaches, outdoor water parks, etc).

Heavy use combined with inadequate financial resources hamper Rhode Island's ability to sustain recreational facilities. As mentioned above, the general public and park and beach user surveys show that Rhode Islanders visit state parks and beaches 10 percent more than the national average and that residents feel there is room to improve the condition of facilities. This combined with figures showing a 29 percent increase in attendance at state parks and beaches over the last five years is placing wear and tear on state facilities. At the same time, both state and local managers report that recreation facilities are under-funded for both maintenance and staffing. For State facilities, this finding is further supported

Table 3-3.2 State Park and Beach Attendance

Year	Attendance
1989	5,072,284
1999	5,815,047
2000	5,960,533
2001	6,711,903
2002	6,538,916

by asset management plans for state beaches, parks and forests plans that found more than 206 high priority repair and replacement projects and that funding levels were insufficient to sustain recreation facilities.

In addition to a balanced approach to funding outdoor recreation, residents surveyed support dedicated funding and some are even willing to pay fees at State parks to address this problem.



There is an opportunity to improve public information and education at facilities and about recreation resources. When asked what kept them from visiting state parks and beaches 19 percent in the public survey stated they did not know what was available, 17 percent did not know the locations of trails and 14 percent did not know the locations of parks. Additionally, fewer than seven percent of recreation managers reported the availability of educational programs at facilities.

Inadequate information constrains participation in some activities and use of some areas and could lead to overuse or overcrowding at other areas. The small number of education and interpretive programs available can't meet demand and leaves visitors unaware of the value of the resource base at recreation sites. The internet offers an opportunity to improve information about the State's

recreational resources and activities on the web. An interactive, map-based website could be developed that shows the location of all recreational facilities included in the 2002 inventory. With the click of a button, the general public could find information about each facility as well as driving directions. An advertising campaign would be needed to direct customers to the site.

More education and interpretation programs at facilities would foster greater appreciation of Rhode Island's environmental resources. Some strides have been made to provide naturalists in State parks and beaches. However, budget and staffing problems constrain efforts, and jeopardize continued offering of these services.

There is an opportunity to improve handicap accessibility. While the State has made considerable progress in improving handicap accessibility, there is still room for improvement. Only half of inventoried facilities report some type of handicap access, equipment or programming and only 58 percent of recreation managers report using universal design in recreation projects. The State has set an objective to provide handicap accessibility at 100 percent of facilities by 2007.

Assuring adequate and easily accessible information on Rhode Island's beaches and parks could enhance tourism.



152-4 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

4-1 The Vision:

A statewide system of connecting greenspaces and greenways, a network made up of natural, historical and cultural resources, outdoor recreation facilities, public spaces, community and urban forests, public and private open spaces. The greenspace system is Rhode Island's permanent green framework within which the state's communities will design and build in the 21st century.



4-2 The 2003 Plan Mission

Strengthen and expand Rhode Island's greenspace and outdoor recreation system.

4-3 The 2003 Plan Goals

1. Building the Greenspace Network...Preserve and Protect Natural and Cultural Resources

Rhode Island will strengthen and expand the statewide network of greenspaces and greenways, with natural, historical and cultural resources and outdoor recreation areas as major features of the network.

2. Stewardship and Partnership...Improve Accessibility, Facilities, Operations and Resource Management

Rhode Island's public and private partners will join as strong stewards of the state's outdoor recreation and open space system and will protect, maintain, and improve its essential features.

3. Meeting Critical Needs...Improve Recreation Opportunities

Rhode Island will improve its system of outdoor recreation facilities and conservation areas to meet the needs of its residents and visitors.

4-4 The Greenspace Network, a Statewide System

Greenspace and the resources it shelters are, the foundation of life in Rhode Island. The state's magnificent bay and its rivers are its lifeblood; the forests, its lungs; and the special places treasured and visited by generation of inhabitants, perhaps as close to an eternal soul as any geopolitical entity can attain.

*A Greener Path...Green spaces and Greenways for Rhode Island's Future
State Guide Plan Element 155, adopted 1994.*

Greenspace is and must continue to be a major component of Rhode Island's landscape. The greenspace network of large open tracts and outdoor recreation areas linked by the greenways provide the framework for designing our communities.

Rhode Island's main open space preservation and outdoor recreation goal is to develop this network as a statewide system. We must continue to assemble a network of protected natural areas linked with the built areas via greenways along rivers, shorelines, trails, bikeways, roadways, pedestrian paths and scenic byways.

The greenspace network is the environmental backdrop against which quality communities are developed. It must extend into established urban centers and neighborhoods in the form of parkland and recreation facilities, landscaped public spaces and green streetscape networks. Greenspace must also be an essential component of private development of all kinds. Useful, effective, connected



Figure 4-4.1 Rhode Island Greenways

greenspace must be a design criteria in all of Rhode Island's physical development, and redevelopment, in urban, suburban, rural or coastal settings.

The greenspace network serves multiple objectives of state environmental and development policy. Preserved greenspace constitutes an environmental safety net protecting the state's irreplaceable legacy of natural and cultural resources. Strengthening the greenspace network, with all its valuable resources, will support development and revitalization of high quality centers for living, working and leisure.

Greenspace provides healthy living environments for all species and opportunities for healthy recreation. Greenway paths offer transportation alternatives, such as bicycling and walking, which are also the two most popular outdoor recreation activities, by far, of Rhode Islanders. Above all, the greenspace network is a public resource that provides all citizens important opportunities to enjoy our outdoor environment.



4-5 Goal 1: Building the Greenspace Network...Preserve and Protect Natural and Cultural Resources

Rhode Island will strengthen and expand the statewide network of Greenspaces and Greenways, with critical natural resources and outdoor recreation areas as major features of the network.

Objective 1: Maintain a comprehensive and continuing program for protecting open space with state, municipal and non-governmental agencies.

Efforts to preserve and manage the resource base on which the recreation system depends have grown more ambitious, better connected and stronger along with the movements for environmental protection, historic preservation, public participation, growth management and quality of life. Nonetheless pressures on open space, natural and cultural resources have risen with increased population and the continuing trend towards larger size houses and house lots. The feasibility of developing a statewide comprehensive environmental plan should be considered.

Sprawl threatens each of the resources discussed in this part of the document. We must move quickly to protect the remaining open space and to restore urban centers. In addition to land protection and watershed programs, the State established the Growth Planning Council to provide recommendations for better growth planning in Rhode Island. One

There are over 60,000 acres of state-protected land and about 30,000 more acres that are protected locally. Since 1994, when the Greenspace and Greenways Plan that sets land acquisition targets was completed, over 17,000 acres of land has been protected through the efforts of DEM's Land Acquisition Program, municipalities, local land trusts, and private nonprofit organizations.

recommendation is to encourage Growth Centers – compact, mixed-use areas in which development would be encouraged through incentives and the elimination of unnecessary regulation that discourage compact growth.

The current land protection strategy sets a target of preserving 3,000 acres per year to achieve the long term goal of a preserving 30 percent of the land area of the state. The state should re-visit the target taking into consideration the increased rate of sprawl as well as the many efforts underway to address the issue.

Finally, all of the resources discussed under this goal are threatened by budget cuts and staff shortages. Capital budgets have been a relative bright spot until recently with \$34 million devoted to land acquisition in 2000 and \$14 million for Heritage projects in 2002 as well as major renovations at state and local parks and beaches.

A related issue is the pressure to convert public property to private uses especially during times of tight budgets. It is the State's policy to not allow loss of land for public recreational use. Proposals to convert recreation system land are subject to full administrative review and should be approved only on the condition of full replacement of the acreage involved with lands having equivalent or greater public recreational value. Such a test is applied to any proposed conversion of recreation land that was purchased or improved with federal funds. To protect the public's investment in recreation land and facilities, the policy to avoid such conversions through high level review must continue.

Action Agenda 2003-2008:

- Develop Open Space funding referendum for the 2004 ballot.
- Continue the accelerated program of protecting open space and re-visit the land protection target.
- Continue to work with The Nature Conservancy (TNC), the Audubon Society of Rhode Island and local land trusts to identify and preserve open spaces.
- Continue to work with the TNC on the central registry of land trusts and an information clearinghouse of technical assistance resources and land trust activities.
- Hold meetings, at least annually, of all private organizations and public agencies involved in land conservation to discuss issues, coordinate efforts, and establish common priorities.
- Work with the Governor's Growth Planning Council and the Planning Institute, on initiatives such as Growth Centers.
- Study the establishment of a self-perpetuating trust fund for open space acquisition that may include a dedicated accrual account to fund acquisition of storm or flood damaged properties in coastal areas and along rivers.

- Protect current recreation lands from unnecessary conversion to other uses by continuing high-level review of any such proposals.
- Continue to acquire land adjacent to or surrounded by protected land.
- Publish an updated greenspace and greenways plan.
- Consider development of a statewide comprehensive environmental plan.

Objective 2: Maintain the state's natural diversity by protecting the integrity of its ecosystems.

One of the states goals is protecting biodiversity through regulation and acquisition, and habitat and species management, including managing invasive species. The State plan for protecting natural diversity, *Rhode Island's Living Legacy* (Draft) is incorporated in this plan by reference. The state has undertaken many projects in the last 10 years to restore both coastal and inland habitats and fisheries. The state has also established the Rhode Island Habitat Team which includes the University of Rhode Island, non-profits, the Coastal Resources Management Council, the US Environmental Protection Agency, DEM, the Army Corps of Engineers and others.

Action Agenda 2003-2008:

- Continue to emphasize ecosystems, animal habitat value and recreational hunting and fishing in the State land protection program.
- Continue to work with municipalities, local land trusts, and other nonprofits to protect important natural areas.
- Continue to support the Natural Heritage Program to identify and document important natural areas and features for protection.
- Incorporate the protection of important natural areas and habitats in management plans for public lands.
- Publish Rhode Island's Living Legacy: Identifying and Preserving the State's Biodiversity (pending funding).



- Develop and publish a companion plan to RI's Living Legacy to focus on invasive species.
- Increase high quality habitat through protecting and restoring fresh and saltwater wetlands, fish runs, sea grass beds, river shorelines, forests and other natural areas, and by acquiring land for habitat protection.
- The state and federal government should continue to provide funding for monitoring and habitat restoration.

Objective 3: Protect water quality, including watersheds, aquifers, rivers, lakes, ponds, streams, and groundwater resource areas.

Planning and management to improve water quality has improved due to the combined efforts of State, Federal and Local agencies, the Rivers Council and the Watersheds Alliance. These non profit consortia were formed in response to the ubiquitous problems of non-point pollution.

Table 4-5.1 Agencies Responsible for Water Resources

Freshwater Resources	Saltwater Resources
DEM water quality regulations and certification, Water Quality Restoration Plans, Wellhead Protection Plans	DEM water quality regulations and certification
EPA/DOH Source Water Assessments	NOAA/CZM/CRMP (Red Book, Special Area and Harbor Management Plans)
Local ordinances and water supply management plans	FDA/DOH Shellfish Management Program
Water Resources Board – Water Supply Management Plans	CRMC/ACOE/DEM dredging regulations

Drinking water quality is of utmost concern. Most land surrounding surface and groundwater resources is privately held and therefore vulnerable to development and contamination. Local development controls are the primary means of protecting drinking water. Some communities have enacted stronger zoning and subdivision regulations, but there has been no evaluation of how effective these have been. All communities are projected to complete Source Water Assessment Plans by 2003 that will identify threats to public drinking water supplies

The state and the region have experienced prolonged drought conditions. In recent years there have been increasing water use conflicts in the Blackstone and Pawcatuck watershed. DEM has committed to developing a stream flow standard by 2003 to insure that stream flow is adequate to maintain water quality and sufficient flow to support aquatic life.

Action Agenda 2003-2008:

- Complete revisions to the RI Water Quality Regulations.
- Continue to work with communities on land management practices and appropriate land uses for critical water resource lands (groundwater aquifers and surface reservoir watersheds).
- Continue to define acceptable recreational uses of watersheds that will safeguard public water supply quality.
- Complete water supply management plans for the four public water suppliers that have not submitted plans.
- Conduct an evaluation of the effectiveness of local land use regulations in protecting water resources.
- Complete development of a water allocation program to increase the ability to make projections on water usage, resolve water demand disputes, and recommend capital improvement projects.
- DEM develop streamflow standards by 2003
- Continue to review hydropower project applications to ensure that the FERC run-of-the-river policy to maintain to protect aquatic resources is enforced.
- Support the work of the Rhode Island Rivers Council and Watershed Councils in protecting the state's rivers.
- Continue the restoration of urban waterways
- Continue the research of The University of Rhode Island's Watershed Watch program and work with the volunteers to identify and carry out recommendations.

Objective 4: Protect wetlands and floodplains to maintain their biological and hydrological functions.

Federal, state and local governments and private sector organizations all play a role in protecting wetlands. State wetlands protection regulations administered by DEM and CRMC have been largely successful in protecting wetlands, and must remain the primary vehicle for wetlands protection.

The federal Emergency Wetlands Resources Act (EWRA) 1986 that authorizes funds for wetland acquisition including the Land & Water Conservation Fund, directs USF&WS and each state to prepare Wetlands Priority Plans as amendments to SCORPS that identify wetland types or areas to be given priority for protection through acquisition programs. See Appendix F for Rhode Island's Wetlands Priority Plan.

Action Agenda 2003-2008:

- Complete the statewide freshwater wetlands conservation plan to coordinate the wetland protection efforts of the DEM Fish and Wildlife Division, the Natural Heritage Program, The Land Acquisition Program, the Wetlands Regulatory Program, municipalities and nonprofits.

- Continue to provide both the freshwater and coastal wetland regulatory processes with adequate resources and professional staff to execute their protection mandates.
- Continue to provide technical assistance and educational outreach to the development community, and other interested parties on wetland avoidance and minimize development impacts in compliance with Freshwater Wetlands regulations.
- Use the CRMC saltwater wetland mitigation policy as a basis to develop clear guidance for how brownfields and historical sites are redeveloped.
- Encourage communities to adopt land management regulations for their floodplains that exceed the minimum requirements of the National Flood Insurance Program.
- Continue to protect floodplains through acquisition of linear parks and greenways.

Objective 5: Protect island and coastal sites.

Islands and coastal areas are especially vulnerable to development, coastal storms and sea level rise. The Partnership for Narragansett Bay and the Coastal Institute are developing a plan to identify and prioritize sites for restoration.



Action Agenda 2003-2008:

- Complete development of a coastal wetland protection and restoration plan coordinating efforts of CRMC, the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program, and partners.
- Assess the impacts associated with sea level rise, and address these impacts in permitting and project design decisions.

Objective 6: Conserve forests for multiple uses: high quality woodland environment for recreation, water supply and wildlife habitat; timber and other products.

The trend toward losing forest area since the 1960s continued with the exception of urban forest land, which has been increasing. In 1998, forests covered 393,000 acres or 59 percent of the land in Rhode Island, a decrease from 1985 when there were 411,800 acres of forest. The forest that remains is fragmented, and the 75 percent of the forestland that is privately owned is being divided into smaller and smaller parcels. During the past 100 years, gypsy moth, chestnut blight, Dutch elm diseases, and more recently, hemlock woolly adelgid have impacted Rhode Island forests. In the coming years, the role of forests in protecting water supplies, as places to recreate, and as components of urban environments will be increasingly important.

Action Agenda 2003-2008:

- Continue to educate the public and landowners regarding sound forest management.



- Continue to work with landowners to maintain/expand markets for timber and non-timber products.
- Continue to acquire key forest parcels.
- Update the State Comprehensive Forest Management Plan (State Guide Plan Element 161), incorporating a multiple resource management approach.

Objective 7: Preserve farmland for active agricultural purposes as well as recreation.

Although Rhode Island farms enjoy the highest return per acre of any agricultural land in the nation, the State continues to lose farmland acres. From 1964 to 1997, RI lost nearly half of its farmland, a decline from 103,801 to 55,256 acres. Between 1988 and 1995, RI lost approximately 1,500 acres of farmland. A projected 3,100 acres of farmland will be consumed in the next twenty years under current conditions of sprawl.

Among agencies cooperating to keeping working farms alive are DEM, the Agricultural Lands, Preservation Commission, The US Department of Agriculture, and the RI Farm Bureau. Programs range from land preservation through purchase of development rights, web based and classroom education



programs, farmers markets and alternative forest businesses. The Agricultural Lands Preservation Commission works with DEM to preserve agricultural lands through purchase of development rights. Farmers are increasing revenue by providing fun activities to the public such as choosing Christmas trees, picking apples and berries, visiting mazes, taking spooky hayrides, and taking part in educational activities during the downtime for crops. Rhode Island's four vineyards offer tours and wine tastings. Some farms offer their lands and barns for riding, racing and boarding of horses. Moreover, individuals and groups are increasingly participating in agriculture related activities for recreational purposes such as tending their own or communal gardens. The public also enjoys buying locally grown and prepared produce and products at roadside stands and farmers markets.

Agricultural land preserved in proximity to other large protected areas stimulates a naturally occurring patchwork of woods and meadows to strengthen the state's

natural diversity. Community gardens and volunteer-run community farms, such as one in Jamestown, provide opportunities for people to farm for their enjoyment of it, while farmland in general, enhances the rural and scenic character of the community and the state.

Actions Items 2003-2008:

- Continue to work with the Agricultural Lands Preservation Commission to maintain and expand protection of working farms through purchase of development rights and the Farm Viability Program.
- Work with the U. S. Department of Agriculture and the Rhode Island Center for Commercial Agriculture to develop and implement an agricultural web page for Rhode Island
- Work with the Rhode Island Farm Bureau to assist the Agriculture In The Classroom program to educate schoolchildren on the importance of agriculture
- Explore the feasibility of a permanent, year-round farmers market in Rhode Island.
- Explore opportunities to develop and promote agriculture in urban areas.

Objective 8: Protect and maintain fish and wildlife populations at optimum levels.

The status of fish and wildlife resources is mixed. On the one hand, population of wildlife such as turkey beaver, fisher, and osprey have increased to sustainable numbers. Problems continue with overabundant species such as mute swans, geese, and white tail deer despite management efforts.

Some marine fisheries are up, others are down. A sharp decline in bottom-dwelling fish and a steep increase in off bottom species and lobster may be reversing. Shellfish and crab abundance have risen while quahogs declined. Overfishing and habitat alteration have done the most harm to important commercial and recreational species such as winter flounder that spend their



entire life cycle in Narragansett Bay. In addition to regulating fishing levels DEM is examining whether habitat can be improved to increase winter flounder and other resident species.

The state is continuing efforts to restore anadromous fisheries such as Atlantic Salmon and herring through construction of fish ways and stocking.

DEM freshwater fish stocking program provides the public with a source of fish that is not contaminated with mercury.

Action Items 2003-2008:

- Continue education programs to foster an awareness and appreciation of the State's wildlife resources.
- Develop a wildlife center with improved office, lab and classroom facilities at the Great Swamp.
- Complete the project to restore anadromous fish to the Ten Mile River.
- Install fishways on the Ten Mile, Blackstone, and Pawcatuck Rivers to restore anadromous fisheries.
- Continue to maintain fields, wetlands, nesting structures and areas, stream banks, wildlife food patches, and fishways.
- Continue mink/mercury sampling and expand program to include other fish-eating species such as river otter, fisher and osprey.
- Continue Chronic Wasting Disease (neurological disease of deer and elk) surveillance and control initiative.
- Control Canada goose population through hunting permits for limited seasons and control populations of Mute Swans through egg addling.
- Continue study of amphibian species to develop stronger conservation recommendations.
- Continue monitoring selected avian species such as Piping Plover, Least Tern, osprey, Snowy and Little Blue Egrets, ibis, Common Tern, double-crested cormorants, and others to assess population levels.
- Continue monitoring and efforts to protect and expand population levels of Federal Endangered Species such as the American Burying Beetle and Sandplain Gerardia.

Objective 9: Preserve and restore significant historic, architectural and archeological sites, buildings and districts.

Many state and municipally-owned historic properties need restoration. However, budget cuts threaten to accelerate deterioration of these resources. Rhode Island's historically significant landscapes, both designed and evolved, also remain threatened, as important resources themselves, or as settings for important sites, structures, or events. Funding for protection, conservation, curation, and interpretation remains a patchwork at best with many sources and a far greater need than supply.

The Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission (RIHPHC) is the agency with primary responsibility for identifying and protecting historical resources, many of which are located in state parks or other open spaces.

The dozens of historic shipwrecks in state waters are also endangered. The emergence of sport diving in the past 25-30 years has created pressures on submerged cultural resources as many divers collect artifacts in defiance of federal and state law.

Action Agenda 2003-2008:

- Investigate the feasibility of establishing an underwater trail in an easily-accessible and monitored area with an historic shipwreck.
- Adopt legislation for additional funding to the Historic Preservation Revolving Fund to maintain an adequate loan reserve, and provide grant funding for projects where loans are not appropriate.
- Initiate a state matching grant-in-aid program based on regular appropriation for work on endangered historic properties.



- Provide funding to the RIHPHC to establish a state Historic Landmarks Program through which important historic buildings could be used as educational and visitor attractions.

Objective 10: Protect scenic areas and resources including landscapes, roadways, and views of the waterfront and significant geologic features.

Rhode Island retains a remarkable legacy of unique natural landscapes and seascapes and scenic roads despite losses and degradation from development and highway construction. The Scenic Highway Board has designated eight roads as scenic roads, helping to preserve their character. However, it does not provide funds for road improvements designed to preserve scenic elements. Poorly planned coastal development along scenic roads can also block visual, and physical access to the water.

Most local zoning does not adequately address the impacts of development on aesthetic or historical resources. As local comprehensive plans and revised zoning codes are prepared, communities should be encouraged to consider actions aimed at maintaining and enhancing their scenic character and landscapes.

The 1992 SCORP recommended that state road maintenance funds should be made available to communities enacting scenic road bylaws. However, no specific funds have been set aside for community maintenance of scenic roads.

Action Agenda 2003-2008:

- Statewide Planning and the Scenic Roadways Board should explore the possibility of providing funding for maintaining the key elements of scenic roadways.
- Encourage local governments to revise their subdivision regulations to include scenic vista protection, especially views of water bodies.
- Encourage coastal towns to include height and mass restrictions in their zoning ordinances to keep buildings from dominating the ridgeline of the shore or from blocking views of the Bay.
- Provide technical assistance to communities, including workshops on techniques for scenic landscape protection.
- Establish a registry program for scenic areas that encourages landowners to maintain scenic views across private lands.
- Provide funding to the RIHPHC to list eligible landscapes on the State and National Registers of Historic Places, and expand the easement program to provide protection for qualifying landscapes, as well as to conduct historical and archaeological surveys, protect, conserve, curate and interpret resources.



4-6 Goal 2: Stewardship and Partnership... Improve Accessibility, Operations and Resource Management

Rhode Island's public and private partners will join as strong stewards of the state's outdoor recreation and open space system to protect, maintain, and improve its essential features.

Objective 1: Improve accessibility for all users

Since the adoption of the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act the state and municipalities have expanded access to recreation facilities for all segments of Rhode Island's population, including those with special needs. About fifty percent of state facilities are now handicap accessible and some facilities have handicap accessible equipment such as surf chairs and hand cycles. DEM and the municipalities work with the Governor's Office on Disabilities to provide full access at new and rehabilitated facilities. DEM received the First Annual Department of Interior Civil Rights Award for outstanding accomplishments in providing equitable services to constituents.

Action Agenda 2003-2008:

- DEM will make all its facilities meet Universal Design standards to allow access by physically limited individuals within the next 5 years.
- Continue to expand offerings of equipment such as surf chairs and hand cycles that facilitate access to outdoor recreation to physically-limited individuals.
- Work with the Governor's Commission on the Handicapped to develop and distribute a directory of handicapped-accessible facilities at state and local parks.

- Continue working with RIPTA to maintain/expand bus service to major recreation facilities as resources permit.
- Develop interpretive and educational programs to accommodate visitors with impaired hearing and vision, and improve signage in this regard.
- Provide rest stops on trails for use by elderly and handicapped persons.

Objective 2: Provide sufficient levels of funding for the acquisition, development, renovation, operation and maintenance of state and local parks, recreation facilities and conservation areas.

Rhode Island has made a significant investment in outdoor recreation facilities. The value of the 123 State outdoor recreation facilities alone is estimated at \$701 million¹. The 934 municipal facilities are worth hundreds of millions more. However, the high level of use and chronic lack of staffing and funding to maintain facilities are beginning to take a toll. Park and beach visitors are beginning to mention overcrowding and maintenance problems at facilities as shown in the responses to the Outdoor Recreation Demand Survey and the Park and Beach User Survey. Moreover, only 21 percent of respondents rated state

The 2001 DEM Asset Management Plans (AMP's) for state parks and beaches and forestry management areas revealed that Rhode Island state parks, beaches and forests have the highest park visit per acre ratio in the country.

recreation facilities as excellent in contrast with respondents elsewhere in the country who rate 30 percent of recreation facilities as excellent. The AMPs described a backlog of 206 priority repairs and replacements at an estimated cost of \$10.6 million in 2001. Municipal recreation programs are facing the same pressures that the state recreation system is facing

Capital projects have fared better than operations and maintenance during the last ten years. The citizens of Rhode Island overwhelmingly approve referenda proving bond funds for open space and recreation development. And the state capital budget underwrote major renovations at state and local facilities such as Misquamicut and Roger Wheeler Beaches, World War II Memorial Park, and Roger Williams Park. The Department of Transportation and FHWA provide funding for design and construction of state and local bike paths, but not for maintenance.

The experience at DEM' Division of Fish and Wildlife management areas shows what can happen when dedicated public resources are available. The F & W management areas are well maintained and the division is expanding handicapped access to its facilities. The division receives dedicated funding for acquisition, development and maintenance of wildlife management areas and

¹ RIDEM Asset Management Plans for Parks and Beaches January 2001 and for Forest Management Areas December 2001.

public access areas from anglers and hunters taxes and as well as state hunting and fishing license fees. The division maintains a 5-year asset management plan.

Partnerships with the non-profits and the private sector have become increasingly important to maintaining and developing outdoor recreation facilities as budgets have declined. Legislation proposed to create a group to support parks, such as the Friends of Rhode Island's Parks, was not heard before the 2002 General Assembly. Groups that are formed for a specific site, such as the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association and the Fort Adams Trust, draw from local residents who have a special fondness for the site and are more likely to succeed.

For the next few years as state and local government cut back on services and expenses, creative ways of funding and providing facilities and services and partnerships will become even more critical to maintaining our recreation system.



Action Agenda for 2003 – 2008:

- Integrate the Parks and Recreation and Forestry Asset Management Plans into the Capital Budget.

- Determine the cost of a base level of service for state recreation to be funded from the General Fund and develop a plan to allow restricted receipts for costs above that level for capital improvements
- Encourage the creation of organizations, such as friends of the park groups, to support specific facilities or parks.
- Explore the increased application of user fees and concession rentals to offset the expenses of providing, operating and maintaining recreation areas and facilities.
- Resubmit legislation to establish state parks and forest foundations.
- Investigate the possibility of selling special license plates to help fund land acquisition and recreation facility development and improvement.
- DEM and municipal parks and conservation agencies should take advantage of opportunities to use volunteers by providing user groups, watershed associations, and others with information and direction as to what kinds of assistance is needed.
- Encourage the option of working in state or local parks for lawbreakers sentenced to perform community service.

Objective 3: Promote sustainable design and building concepts in recreation projects.

The incorporation of energy-saving and recycled and vandal resistant materials and design elements such as siting for passive solar gain will reduce pollution, can save energy and other resources and reduce the cost of long-term operation and maintenance of public buildings and other facilities. The use of native vegetation and xeriscaping will similarly save water, reduce pollution and save on maintenance costs.

Action Agenda 2003 – 2008:

- State Energy Office and DEM promote green design to architects, contractors, and the public.
- Continue to incorporate green design into plans for all new and major renovations to minimize operation and maintenance costs, and the use of non-renewable resources.
- The Recreation Resource Review Committee (RRRC) should continue to give additional weight to applications that consider operating and maintenance budgetary needs.
- Continue to use vandal-resistant materials and construction in facility designs.
- Continue to design facilities to maximize visual access for ease of monitoring and enforcement.
- Install more composting toilets at major locations in the State management areas such as Browning Mill Pond Recreation Area and the Arcadia Management Area Check Station.

- DEM will design and build Snake Den Park and the Great Swamp Wildlife Center to meet Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) sustainable design standards.

Objective 4: Improve public outreach and information about public recreation opportunities.

Funding for recreation outreach and information continued to be constrained over the last ten years and is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. However, widespread availability of electronic media, particularly computer generated maps and websites, has provided brand new services such as online boat registration and new channels for outreach. DEM information is generated by separate divisions, as funding becomes available. There has been no central entity within the Department to coordinate information and education materials since the Division of Information and Education was disbanded in the early 1990's.

Recent increases in non-English speaking populations in the state have increased the need for outreach materials for these groups as documented in Multi-Lingual/Cultural Services and Outreach for the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, August 2001. The Department has made some progress in reaching non-English speaking constituents, but a great deal remains to be done. DEM publishes brochures in languages other than English and offers a boating safety course in Spanish. DEM is researching translation services to provide wider access to information on its website



DEM education programs include training to teachers in wetlands, water and wildlife topics; classroom ecology sessions and field sampling, fishing programs

for schools, clubs, special needs and youths at risk, several boating and hunter safety courses and a Park Naturalist program. However, there are not enough resources to meet demand.

More education and interpretation programs are needed to foster greater awareness and appreciation of Rhode Island's environmental resources. Programs for those with impaired vision and hearing are needed, as are interpretive devices and signs.

Some programs draw on cooperative arrangements. Programs related to the Blackstone Heritage Corridor, for example, involve the National Park Service, and the Parks Association of Rhode Island. State and federal agencies work in partnership with non-profits and municipalities such as the Audubon Society of Rhode Island, Save the Bay and Roger Williams Park Zoo.

Action Agenda 2003 – 2008:

- Establish an interactive, map-based website that shows the location of all recreational facilities in the 2002 Inventory of Rhode Island Outdoor Recreation Facilities.
- Collect all DEM public information and educational materials on the DEM website and post in one web page with links to other information such as the Economic Development Corporation 's Tourism web page and the RI DOT's Bike RI web page.
- Ensure stable funding for and expand the summer naturalist program in the State parks.
- Compile and publish information on private facilities that are open to the public.
- Seek funding to develop informational materials in languages other than English.
- Provide translated materials on websites with recreation information.
- Update and republish Publish Access to the Rhode Island Coast (see Public Access to the Shore in Section III).
- Finalize mapping of all State forest, State wildlife management, and other public lands using GIS.
- Continue to support the environmental education efforts of organizations such as the Audubon Society of Rhode Island, the Watershed Councils and the National Wildlife Federation.
- Publish detailed map/guides to marine areas including boating, shore fishing and shellfishing.



Objective 5: Encourage partnerships and strengthen the professional capacity for recreation, conservation and open space planning and management at all levels

Partnerships with non-profit organizations have played a pivotal role in providing outdoor recreation and protecting open space. Private businesses have also contributed to support of recreation facilities and programs. Some local sports leagues help maintain ball fields. Businesses, individual volunteers, and environmental groups help organize and provide workers for cleanups and special events.

The level of expertise and experience among local park and recreation staff varies. Some communities have experienced full-time staff while others have part-time staff. Four communities have no recreation staff. Communities could benefit from assistance such as seminars for recreation planning, sustainable and cost-effective design and maintenance, and grantwriting.

Partnerships can also play a role in reducing vandalism, littering, break-ins, and illegal dumping which continues at some recreation facilities. Higher visibility law enforcement and increased patrols, possibly even citizen watch groups, of remote areas are part of the answer. Law enforcement personnel need the authority, training, and resources to deter abuse of our open space and recreation areas. Restricting vehicular access to remote areas, especially at

night and off-season, can cut down on vandalism. The development of hard-to-patrol sites should be discouraged. In addition, experience in state parks, notably at Scarborough State Beach, has shown that if facilities are upgraded and then well maintained, the level of vandalism drops off markedly.

State recreation officials have also expressed concern about public safety when some facilities fill to capacity on weekends and evenings in very hot weather. Training park personnel in handling conflict, developing flexible enforcement strategies to respond as attendance demands and partnerships with state and local law enforcement agencies will ensure that facilities remain safe.

Action Agenda 2003 – 2008:

- Support and expand the training currently provided by Grow Smart Rhode Island for municipalities in community planning and growth management.
- Support the development of nonprofit conservation and recreation organizations, and encourage their continuing participation in state and local recreation and open space preservation, operation, management, and planning.
- Request that The National Park Service sponsor training and technical assistance workshops for local park officials.
- Re-establish the Local Planning Assistance Program or a replacement that can assist municipalities with recreational planning needs.
- Establish a work group of state, municipal and non-governmental agencies to develop a regional recreational facility planning program.
- Encourage the Rhode Island Parks and Recreation Association to establish an information clearinghouse and/or to hold workshops on park system management for local recreation staff.
- Encourage private sector operators to provide in-park concessions, including sailing, canoe and boat rentals, refreshments, concerts, and horseback riding.
- Working with local tourism councils, determine the need for additional facilities (such as campgrounds or picnic areas). Encourage private sector involvement to satisfy such needs.
- Investigate Adopt-A-Park programs in other states and encourage the formation of such groups in Rhode Island. Establish a model program, possibly in the Blackstone River State Park.
- Train lifeguards and other recreation facility staff in handling conflicts.
- Seek approval to increase salaries for seasonal staff to assure the safety and provide adequate services to the public.
- Develop a flexible enforcement strategy that allows Environmental Police or other enforcing authorities to respond to crowded areas as attendance demands.



4-7 Goal 3: Meeting Critical Needs...Improve and Expand Recreation Opportunities

Rhode Island will improve and expand recreational opportunities to meet the needs of its residents and visitors.

Objective 1: Maintain a balanced system of developed and undeveloped resources and facilities to accommodate a range of recreational activities.

The need for more and different facilities and services to meet the needs of a growing and changing population is evident. The highest demand is for salt water beaches, paved paths for biking and walking, picnic shelters/areas, historical sites and museums, outdoor areas for festival/special events and natural areas/wildlife habitats (need expressed by more than 58 % of household respondents to the 2002 Outdoor Demand Survey).

Individual and small-group oriented activities such as skate parks (State and Local Park and Recreation Directors Survey) are increasingly in demand while demand for facilities for organized sports (except soccer) is has declined somewhat. Some state and local park and recreation directors are moving to multi-use playing fields to save money. However, other recreation directors are sticking with single use fields to avoid maintenance problems that can occur on multi-use field due to increased traffic on grassy surfaces.

There is still a need to provide more open space, recreation facilities and linkages to the state open space and recreation system for urban residents.

Action Agenda 2003 - 2008:

- Implement the DEM Asset Management Plans for facility maintenance and repairs.
- Rehabilitate the facilities at East Matunuck State Beach.
- Seek to acquire and develop new coastal sites for campgrounds.
- Explore the feasibility of opening Scarborough South and Misquamicut to self-contained campers for overnight stays.
- Develop limited parking area at Rome Point.
- Maintain the Narragansett Bay Islands as wildlife management and low impact recreation areas
- Encourage recreational projects that appropriately integrate a variety of recreational opportunities and provide activities for a mix of age groups and degrees of physical abilities.

Objective 2: Expand public access to the shoreline.

The Coastal Resource Management Council (CRMC) is charged with protecting the public's right to access to the shore by designating public rights of way to the shore and installing permanent markers to identify them. Restricted funding has prevented the Council from fully carrying out this responsibility. Shore front property owners in many areas have removed markers and otherwise tried to restrict public access. Funding is needed to revitalize this program and to expand it by working with other state agencies and municipalities to ensure public access when commercial, residential and public use spaces are planned. With population growth expected in the coming years there will be increasing pressure to develop shoreline areas.

The State can ensure shoreline access by maximizing the access and recreational potential of the Public Trust Doctrine rights, encouraging new access in existing committed shorelines, acquiring and developing, key access points, improving and expanding facilities where it owns waterfront properties, and capitalizing on the access opportunities of new coastal developments. Coastal communities need to adopt growth controls that protect and make available additional shoreline access to complement state efforts.

Action Agenda 2003-2008:

- Revitalize the Coastal Resources Management Council's Shoreline Access Program.
- Publish an updated Public Access to the Rhode Island Coast.
- Continue to identify public access points with indestructible markers.

- Encourage local acquisition of coastal lands to stem the loss of traditional water-dependent uses along the coast. Continue to encourage municipalities to enact land use controls to protect working waterfronts and public access.
- Investigate the feasibility of a water trail to the Narragansett Bay Islands with linkage to water transportation.
- Identify coastal sites for acquisition based on recreation potential, ecological function and public access.
- Require municipalities to address coastal public access in the recreation and open space elements of community comprehensive plans.
- Develop model legislation that would enable state and local land use regulation agencies to require public access to the shore.
- Require coastal land-owning public and quasi-public agencies, to assess the public access potential of lands under their control.

Objective 3: Expand recreational boating opportunities.

Sailboats, motorized craft, canoes, kayaks, and windsurfers use coastal waters even through the coldest months. More than 100 boating-related events ranging from weekly club regattas to major ocean race starts are held in our coastal waters.

Increased boat traffic has heightened safety concerns, particularly with regard to operating while under the influence of alcohol and lack of knowledge of boating safety practices. The State enacted two laws in 2001 to address both issues. The first sets alcohol limits and penalties similar to the driving while intoxicated standards and requires the same levels of testing. The second requires those born after 1985 who operate a boat with a motor greater than 10 horsepower to complete a boating safety course. DEM and the Coast Guard Auxiliary provide boating safety courses in English and Spanish. DEM also promotes the use of life jackets through education and outreach.

Action Agenda 2003-2008:

- Encourage municipalities to implement recommendations of their harbor management plans to increase mooring and dock space.
- Continue boating safety education and enforcement programs.
- Work with boating and fishing user groups in assessing needs and priorities in acquiring and developing boat launch sites.

Objective 4: Improve opportunities for recreational use of rivers, lakes, ponds, streams and other inland waters.

River systems offer opportunities to create greenways connecting urban, suburban, and rural areas. In addition to providing opportunities for water-

related recreation, they can control and channel growth and help define the form and character of the developed landscape.

The potential to provide water-based recreation opportunities close-to-home is being demonstrated as a system of state and local parks is taking form along the Blackstone River. This recognition of the river as a community resource has stimulated local investments in parks along the river in Central Falls, Cumberland, Woonsocket, North Smithfield, and Pawtucket. The Blackstone can serve as a model showing how a heavily urbanized river system can be brought back as both a recreational resource and a historic landscape.

The involvement of watershed associations, private conservation groups, and user groups in river and stream land protection efforts and as advocates and watchdogs has been an essential ingredient of the successes to date, and will continue to grow in importance as public funding becomes tighter. Land protection along rivers should remain a high priority of state and local conservation efforts.

Recreational use of our rivers is high, and access is improving due to the efforts of state agencies, municipalities and Watershed Councils. Additional access must be provided, as should well defined and marked portage routes, adequate parking, and public information.



Rhode Island's streams, lakes, and ponds attract many users as well. Providing opportunities for freshwater swimming, especially in the metropolitan region, is vitally important. These areas also experience user conflicts. Reducing crowding at more popular freshwater beaches might involve carefully promoting the underused freshwater facilities, and ensuring that the smaller lakes and ponds throughout the state continue to provide local swimming opportunities. The development of Snake Den Park will provide a major freshwater recreation area.

Action Agenda 2003-2008:

- Promote the establishment of linear parks and riverway land protection in accordance with Watershed Action Plans.

- Focus inland acquisition efforts within identified greenspace areas and greenways providing recreational access to rivers, including the Wood, Pawcatuck, Blackstone, and Moosup Rivers.
- Continue working with the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission to complete the Blackstone River State Park.
- Continue development of the Woonasquatucket River Greenway.
- Continue DEM program of developing portage points and campgrounds along frequently used river systems.

Objective 5: Improve hunting and fishing opportunities throughout the state.

In the last ten years DEM has recorded 20,000 visits and 60,000 hours of hunting in management areas. Pheasant hunting is a popular activity enjoyed by thousands of licensed hunters from mid-October until Thanksgiving. DEM stocks an average of 3,500 pheasants annually in state wildlife management areas.



As development swallows up more open land, access to areas for hunting becomes more limited and the people who move to the more rural areas of the state are largely opposed to hunting near their homes. Yet the federal taxes on hunter and fishing equipment is returned to the state to purchase land for habitat protection and for program operating expenses

DEM acquired one and expanded two fish hatcheries in the past seven years. Stocking hatchery-raised trout is enormously popular and provides not only recreation, but a source of fish that is not contaminated with mercury as are all naturally-occurring freshwater fish.

Action Agenda 2003 - 2008:

- Expand youth archery hunt.
- Complete capital improvements at the Perryville and Lafayette fish hatcheries to continue and expand trout stocking at 82 locations.
- Continue to maintain and improve boat launching ramps and shore fishing areas.

Objective 6: Maintain and expand the state's network of trails and pedestrian paths, in natural and built areas.

Unpaved trails and paved bike paths ranked as a 3rd priority among Rhode Island's needs in the Outdoor Recreation Demand Survey. Sixty-three percent of respondents in the public survey said they have a need for paved walking and biking trails. Sixty-six percent of the respondents said they participated in walking over the past year and the mean number of days reported was 140.5. Mountain biking is also becoming an increasingly popular on unpaved trails. Establishing new trails, extending those that are partially constructed and making connections between existing trails and greenways is a priority.

The use of off-road vehicles (ORV's) has increased dramatically in the last decade and the Trails Advisory Committee frequently receives requests from off-road motorized vehicle groups for the state to provide expanded opportunities to use their vehicles and to set aside an area for ORV use. The State allows limited use of motorized bikes and snowmobiles in specified portions of some management areas. For a discussion of the issue see Appendix G.

Action Agenda 2003 – 2008:

- Continue to develop state and local, paved and unpaved trails that connect existing parks, management areas, beaches, open spaces and urban centers.
- Continue to develop, print and distribute trail guides and encourage municipalities to do the same.
- Complete the construction of the Blackstone River Bikeway.
- Continue to develop the Trestle Trail, Ten Mile River Bikeway and South County Bikeways/Trails.
- Implement plans for the Woonasquatucket River and Warwick Bicycle Network Bikeways.
- Develop improved pedestrian connections from the East Side of the Providence River to the East Bay Bike Path.
- Implement a study to monitor how the increased use of the Blackstone Bikeway affects the surrounding ecosystem (e.g. wildlife, waterfowl and water quality).
- Improve the trail maintenance program by ensuring all trails are evaluated and repaired at least once every five years in addition to maintaining them on an as needed basis.
- Continue to address trail use-restrictions, planning, construction, maintenance, and enforcement issues at management areas through the Trail Advisory Committee and the Northwest and Arcadia Management Councils.
- Maximize the trail looping system at Arcadia Management Area.
- Develop a strategy to increase the number of official and volunteer patrols.
- Develop and implement a public education program to minimize conflicts among hikers, bikers, hunters and other user groups.

- Convene a group to address the request for expanded use of motorized vehicles on public lands.

Objective 7: Provide adequate recreational opportunities for urban residents, including close to home facilities and connections to more rural areas.

Providing close to home recreational opportunities is largely the responsibility of municipalities. The State provides assistance through the local recreational grants program and linking urban neighborhoods to state management areas and statewide recreational opportunities through adequate bus routes and construction of paved bike paths and trails. In the past ten years many trails have been planned, initiated, and some completed. The East Bay Bike Path connects the City of Providence to Colt State Park in Bristol, the Trestle Trail connects our most urbanized areas to the Nicholas Farm on RI's western border, and the Blackstone River Bikeway connects Providence with the more rural section of the Blackstone River. The Blackstone River Bikeway connection into the City of Providence from Pawtucket must be completed. The development of Snake Den State Park will provide an easily accessible and affordable water park for urban residents just ten miles west of Providence

Action Agenda 2003 – 2008:

- Develop Snake Den State Park, as a multi-use water park with trails, picnic areas, etc.
- Continue the development of the Blackstone River State Park, from Manville to the Massachusetts border.
- DEM and the City of Providence should identify connections to the Blackstone River Bikeway into Providence.
- DEM should work with DOT and FHWA on the new I-195 bridge to develop bike and walkways separated from vehicle lanes to improve the connection to the East Bay Bike Path.
- DEM should work with DOT and the City of Providence to encourage development of connections from the Woonasquatucket River Greenway and Buttonhole Golf Course.
- DEM should begin to develop plans for urban connections into Arcadia Management Area.
- Develop programs to provide signage and/or handouts for non-English speaking park users, and encourage the hiring of bi-lingual park personnel.
- Cooperate with municipalities to transfer small state-owned recreational areas that serve primarily local recreation needs.
- RRRC will give priority to projects that serve a minority population, are served by public transportation, or are in densely-populated neighborhoods or growth centers.

- Review local comprehensive plans to assure that standards for recreational facilities are met.

Objective 8: Promote Rhode Island's open space and recreational resources to tourists, while protecting the quality and stability of the resource base.

Tourism is the second largest industry in Rhode Island in terms of revenue. State Beaches in the southwestern portion of the state derive 56 percent of their parking receipts from out-of-state visitors. Much of the tourism is linked to activities such as recreational boating and fishing in Narragansett Bay and offshore. Visitors are also drawn to management areas that offer hunting, golfing, skiing, biking, hiking, and bird watching, among other activities. Birding groups of between 20 and 200 visit regularly to observe the fall migration. The



tourist industry depends on the same features that are important to Rhode Island residents: a clean, healthy, and accessible bay and beaches, our natural, cultural, scenic, and historic resources, and attractive, safe and accessible parks, management areas, and other open spaces.

We must maintain the balance between high quality recreational experiences, meeting local recreational demands, and tapping the tourist market to ensure that tourists' use of recreation and open space facilities does not overtax them and displace resident users. Better coordination and mutual understanding between recreation managers and the tourism industry can help protect Rhode Island's natural resource base while continuing to generate tourism revenue.

Action Agenda 2003 - 2008:

- Encourage communication among recreation, tourism, and economic development agencies and private tourism interests should be made more formal and regular.
- Use State/Local Greenways Plans to guide tourist promotion and the development of natural-and cultural resource-based tourist attractions.
- Develop and publish "Watchable Wildlife" guides.

**Ocean State Outdoors:
Rhode Island's Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan**

**Public Hearing Draft
February 2003**

ADDENDUM

In its acceptance of the draft for a public hearing, the State Planning Council authorized the following changes:

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Add the following sentence before the last sentence in the paragraph under Objective 7:

“A linkage between India Point Park and the Providence Riverwalk system must also be accomplished.”

Under “Action Agenda 2003-2008”, add the following new bullet after the fifth bullet:

- **“DEM, DOT and the City of Providence should work with neighborhood groups to identify and create a pedestrian and bicycle linkage between India Point Park and the Providence Riverwalk.”**